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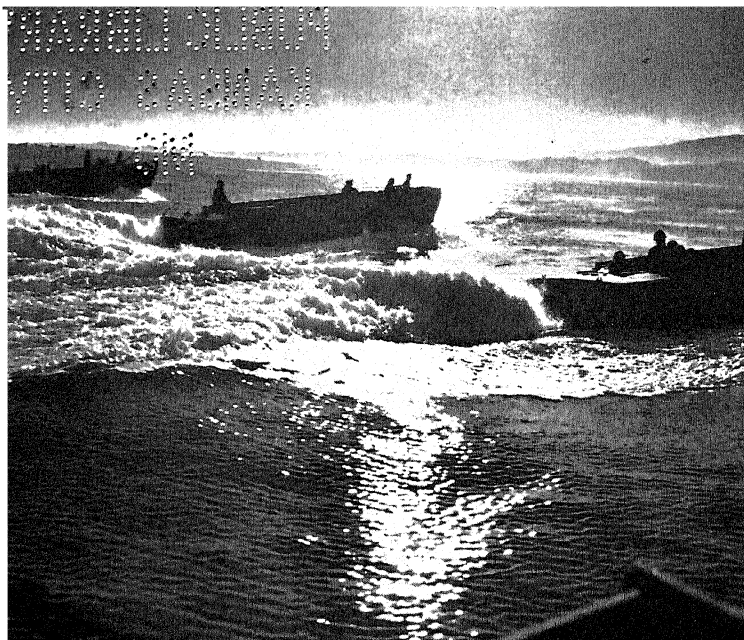
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## FIRST FLEET







*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### WAVES OF MEN AND WAVES OF WATER

Waves of men as well as waves of water head for the beach as U. S. Coast Guardsmen drive their landing barges toward a South Pacific island during an intensive invasion drill. Many of the Coast Guardsmen participating in the early-morning drill are veterans of the original Guadalcanal invasion.

# FIRST FLEET

*The Story of the  
U. S. Coast Guard at War*

by  
REG INGRAHAM

INTRODUCTION BY  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FRANK KNOX

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## *Introduction*

THE STORY of the Coast Guard's role in this war is well known to those of us who have followed the course of the war at sea closely. But those who associate the Coast Guard mainly with its peacetime functions of safeguarding American lives and property at sea and protecting legitimate shipping along our coasts and inland waterways might wonder what the activities of the service are in time of war. For those people this book will supply the answer.

An operating part of the Navy since the President's declaration of a national emergency in November, 1941, the Coast Guard fought hard and effectively in the Battle of the Atlantic. The loss of ships and men suffered in this battle is sad, mute evidence of the force of its fight. More heartening evidence lies at the bottom of the sea in the battered hulls of German U-boats.

Again the Coast Guard has been highly valuable in landing operations. With their traditional knowledge of the handling of small boats in all kinds of surf and under all sorts of conditions, Coast Guardsmen were with the first Marines that landed in the Solomons; and they were an equally essential factor in the success of the Navy task forces that have since effected landings in North Africa, in Sicily,

## INTRODUCTION

in Italy and in the islands of the Pacific. The story of their work in these operations is one that deserves to be told in the permanent form of a book.

But there are other things than these—things for which the nation at war has been dependent upon the Coast Guard. The security of our all-important ports, the protection of our thousands of miles of coast line, the manning of many of our troop transports, the rescue of mariners at sea, the testing and regulation of lifesaving equipment aboard our merchant ships and the maintenance of necessary aids to navigation—all these are functions and responsibilities of the Coast Guard. They are jobs that have to be done and done well, and they are eminently worth reading about.

FRANK KNOX.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*So many of the commissioned, enlisted and civilian personnel at Coast Guard Headquarters assisted in providing material for this book that it would not be possible to list them here, but I wish particularly to express my thanks to Captain Ellis Reed-Hill and his staff, notably Warrant Officer Arthur Bernon Tourtellot, without whose friendly and expert co-operation the book would not have been undertaken. The opportunity to talk with the Coast Guard's quiet, capable Commandant, Vice Admiral Russell R. Waesche, and such outstanding cutter captains as Commander James Hirshfield was of inestimable help. I also wish to thank Mr. Archibald Ogden for his interest from the start.*



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## FIRST FLEET



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE FIRST BLOW

IT WAS snowing hard that mid-September day in 1941 when the Coast Guard cutter *Northland* shoved her sturdy snout carefully through the placid waters of the "Finger" fjord section on the northeast coast of Greenland. War had not yet come to the United States and the cutter still was wearing her peacetime coat of cream and white paint. Not a man aboard, however, failed to realize the grim potentialities of their mission for they were hunting Nazi installations!

Just what they would encounter was indefinite. Maybe carefully hidden radio or weather-reporting stations or even a small task force. Up to that time, though, the search had been fruitless, and about all that varied the monotony of the calm weather inside the ice pack were the visits they paid to isolated little hunting posts on the intricate system of fjords in the area to evacuate settlers or hunters who wished to get back to the larger communities for the winter.

While on one of those missions, the *Northland* received a message from another cutter in a distant fjord saying that two Danish hunters had reported sighting a strange vessel farther up the coast. The second cutter was patrolling the

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area but requested aid because of the snowstorm's drastic curtailment of visibility. As events proved, this precautionary step was well taken.

The report was exciting news for the *Northland*, and her skipper, Commander Carl Christian von Paulsen—he's a four-striper now—at once set a course for the spot named by the two hunters. It was several hundred miles distant and the cutter already was farther north than any other United States Navy ship had ever gone on routine operations. All hands were tense. In addition to the navigational dangers involved, there was also the possibility that the ship they were seeking would turn out to be a German warship, in which case the lightly armed *Northland* might run into trouble.

These fears proved groundless, however, for when their quarry was sighted the next afternoon steaming slowly along the coast, she proved to be the former Norwegian sealing ship *Busko*.

Square-jawed Lieutenant Commander Leroy McCluskey, then only a jaygee serving as assistant navigator of the cutter, studied the newcomer but there was nothing to show that he felt any sense of personal historical importance. Likewise, it's a cinch he had no idea of starting a war. Nevertheless, before many hours had elapsed he was up to his wind-whipped ears in an incident which history may record as the actual opening of hostilities between the United States and the Third Reich.

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When the *Northland* sighted the *Busko*, both vessels were well outside Greenland's territorial limits and, had the *Busko's* skipper so desired, he could legally have thumbed his nose at the Americans and continued on his way. Possibly the sight of the cutter's readied deck guns may have had something to do with it, but at any rate the Norwegian complied willingly when the *Northland* ran alongside and it was suggested that he accompany her into Greenland waters. Once there, von Paulsen sent McCluskey aboard to make an investigation.

The *Busko's* expedition was headed by Hallvard Devold, a well-known Norwegian Arctic explorer, and at first he and the rest of his party maintained that they were simply on a hunting expedition. McCluskey was a veteran of the Coast Guard's hectic days on Rum Row and reluctant witnesses were no novelty to him, so it wasn't long before he had elicited the information from one of the younger members of the party that they had put complete equipment for a radio and weather-reporting station ashore still farther up the east coast in charge of a man who had been put aboard their ship in the Lofoten Islands by the German Gestapo!

That settled it. Under an agreement the United States had with the Danish minister in Washington for the protection of Greenland after the Nazis had occupied Denmark, von Paulsen seized the *Busko*, put a prize crew aboard and started her for Boston. Then he set the *Northland's* course

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for the site of the Nazi radio station. That night they anchored in a fjord about five miles from their objective.

Again von Paulsen called on McCluskey. This time he was to head the landing party with orders to seize and destroy the radio station and capture its operators.

"We'll put a couple of reserves in charge of this job," said von Paulsen, with heavy sarcasm. "We can spare them better. McCluskey, you and Skinner take a landing party and knock off this station."

Skinner was Lieutenant (j.g.) Carleton Skinner, a tall blond stripling who used to be a Washington newspaperman.

Oblivious of their skipper's jibes, the two officers were considerably thrilled by the assignment.

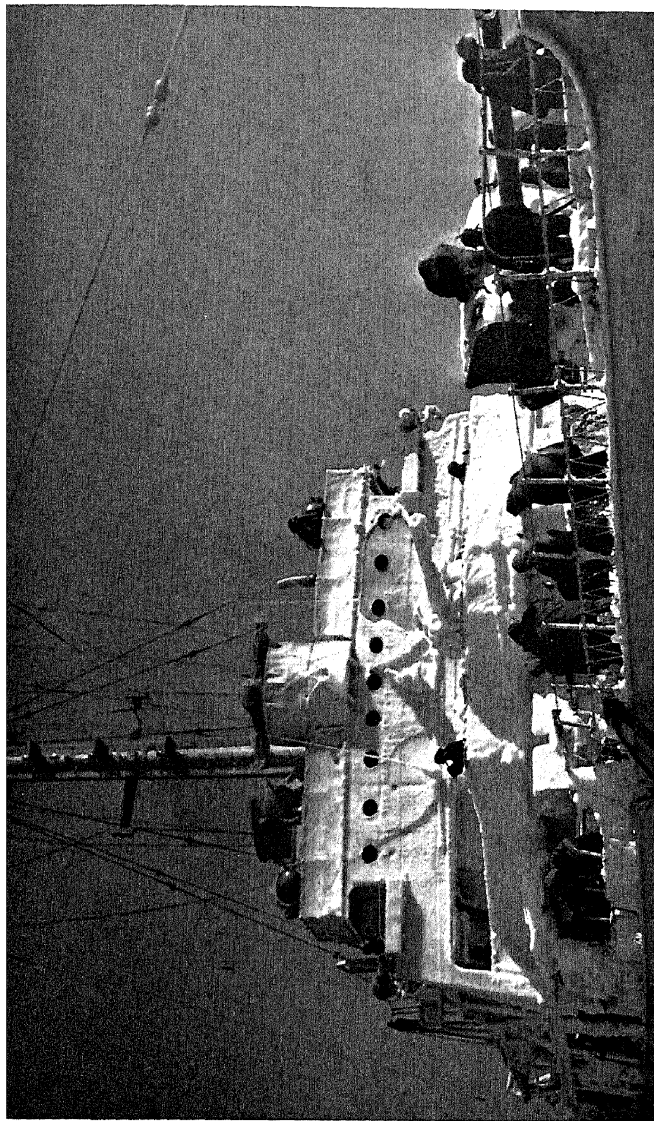
"There was a lump in my throat as big as an egg, though, when I went over the side into the motor surfboat that night," Skinner recalled. "We had been told there were only three men at the radio station, but we couldn't be sure just what kind of a reception we'd get."

Also in the party was the skipper's cabin boy who had clamored to be taken along.

"Make him lug something heavy, then," growled von Paulsen when he finally had acquiesced. "Give him a tommy gun!"

The weird Arctic dawn was just breaking when the little group sighted the old hunters' shack in which the radio station was housed. McCluskey surrounded the hut with part





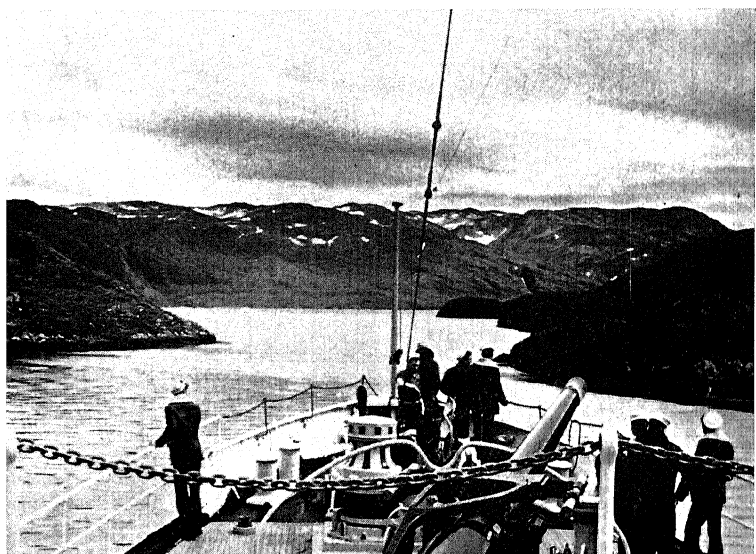
*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

## COAST GUARDSMEN BATTLE WEATHER

Coast Guardsmen battle weather as well as the enemy. In far northern waters their ships some-



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*



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of his men and then, after a brief reconnaissance, hammered boldly on the door.

Presently a sleepy-looking individual in long woolen underwear but minus his pants appeared. It was the radio operator, but he was so completely surprised that he couldn't even talk. With him in the cabin were a couple of hunters but they remained stolidly in their bunks, taking no part in the little drama being enacted before them.

It may come as something of a surprise to the Marines, but McCluskey's party was first identified to the astonished occupants of the hut as United States Marines! This was due to the fact that McCluskey's interpreter, a naturalized Dane named Petersen who was one of the *Northland's* radiomen, did not know the word for Coast Guard in Danish. Marines was as close as he could get to it.

Interrogation at the shack and later aboard the *Northland* developed the fact that the radio operator put ashore by the *Busko* was a Norwegian quisling named Jacob Bradley. He had been third mate on a freighter but had gone back to Norway a couple of years earlier and had become the leader of a Bergen water-front unit of Quisling's party. Soon after the occupation of Norway, however, the Gestapo had deposed him for "incompetency." This was tantamount to black-listing and for months he was out of work.

When his fortunes were at their lowest ebb, he was told that if he wanted a job, he could get it by applying to a certain address in Oslo. That turned out to be Gestapo head-

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quarters and when he arrived there, he was offered the radio-weather-reporting job in Greenland and was told the Nazis would train him for it. The Nazis had so thoroughly preconditioned him, by ousting him from his political job and preventing him from obtaining any other work, that he was ready to agree to almost anything.

Following the capture of the station, McCluskey and Skinner seized or destroyed all the German equipment and supplies on the scene but were careful to leave the shack and all that had been in it prior to Bradley's arrival. Such things as the radio masts they dismantled and took aboard the *Northland* which had moved close inshore in the interim.

Americans of the mind-our-own-international-business school of thought doubtless find it hard even now to stomach the idea of the Coast Guard, a law-enforcement agency of the United States, barging into one foreign country and capturing the agent of still another nation with which we still were at least technically at peace. In ordinary circumstances, or let us say in an earlier day, such action would have been ample provocation for a declaration of war. On this occasion, however, the United States' legal basis for the action was the agreement she had made to guarantee Greenland's security.

Whatever the effect upon that security, the immediate practical effect of the station's seizure was that it prevented the Nazis from obtaining weather reports from Greenland—Europe's weather factory—which would have been ex-

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tremely valuable, nay almost indispensable, to the planning of their air attacks on Britain. No doubt the Nazis also had realized that Greenland was on the direct route which bombers and other planes would use in flying from the United States to Britain. A radio station on that route, therefore, would be valuable for reporting aerial traffic to interceptor planes of the Luftwaffe waiting at Norwegian bases.

Since the Nazis failed to conquer Russia after their initial tremendous drive into that country, it has been suggested that the lack of long-range weather data from Greenland deprived the Germans of advance information as to the unusual severity of the first winter their armies were to spend in the land of the Soviets. Cautious meteorological experts won't subscribe unequivocally to that theory, pointing out that the weather in April or May in the Greenland area seems to have no bearing on what the following winter will be like in Russia. On the other hand, they concede it cannot be said that the Greenland data would have been of no help to the Germans in planning their Russian campaign. Certainly, had they known how terrible that first winter was going to be, they would either have invaded Russia earlier or made better preparations for the winter fighting.

Viewed in that light, therefore, perhaps McCluskey's expedition had much more far-reaching effects than simply denying the Germans data for planning raids on Britain. At any rate, one thing sure: While history may record that

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America was dragged into the global war when the Japs struck at Pearl Harbor, the Coast Guard had dealt the Nazis a damaging blow many weeks earlier and in a totally different part of the globe. It was the first instance in which the United States went on the offensive against the Germans, and no matter how the diplomats slice it, the blow dealt at that time can never be regarded as a friendly act.

Before leaving the scene of this initial "victory" over the Axis, McCluskey and his men set fire to the German stores. The last thing they could see as the *Northland* headed out of the fjord was a tall straight column of black smoke climbing into the still Arctic air. It was a signal, a signal of hope to the Old World and a sign to freedom lovers everywhere of blows which would be struck in the months to come, not only by the Coast Guard but by all the armed forces of the United States, against international banditry.

Seizure of that tiny radio station, an incident which soon was forgotten in the terrible rush of events which followed, demonstrated that no matter how unready the rest of the nation was for war, the Coast Guard was living up to its ancient motto, "*Semper Paratus*," in traditional fashion. In the ensuing months the nation's oldest sea service furnished even more convincing proof of its readiness to meet all emergencies.

For example, when war did come at Pearl Harbor, the 165-foot Coast Guard cutter *Taney* was one of the few ships there which managed to get guns into action against the at-

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tackers. Since that dire day, other men and ships of the service have fought in every major American campaign of the war from the Solomons to Sicily.

They handled the invasion barges which took the Marines ashore at Tulagi and the doughboys into North Africa. They manned the far-ranging combat cutters which have hung up one of the finest records of the war in their ceaseless battle against the U-boats in the North Atlantic and they sailed many of the transports which carried the nation's fighting men to battle fronts all over the world.

Through all its operations, a dominant theme of the Coast Guard has been the promotion of safety at sea—the organization's primary mission in peace or war. When a Coast Guard cutter sinks a submarine, for example, it is not so much for the purpose of killing Germans—although that is a popular by-product—as to prevent that submarine from sinking American ships and men.

Making war comes naturally to the Coast Guard, nevertheless, because even while the nation is at peace, the Coast Guard is battling enemies of one kind or another. If not smugglers in Florida, then it is salmon poachers or fur thieves in Alaska. So the transition from its peacetime activities to international warfare is not a long one for the Coast Guard.

Despite the glamour of its exploits and the magnitude of the contributions it has made on the fighting fronts, the general public has all too scant an idea of just what this service

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has done in the war. It still is associated in the public mind with the somewhat prosaic job of patrolling a lonely stretch of beach. Naturally, the Coast Guard still has its "sand-pounders," as the beach patrolmen are called, but like the rest of the service, you're likely to find them anywhere in the world.

It's a standing joke, in fact, that some of the lads who enlisted in the Coast Guard in the early days of the war did so either with the idea of sticking close to their best girl, or because their mothers thought a home-defense outfit like the Coast Guard was the safest place for Junior to be in wartime.

"Sure, we still guard the coast," grinned one veteran of the Battle of the Atlantic, "but they don't tell you what coast any more when you sign on. It might be in the Aleutians or somewhere on the edge of *Festung Europa*."

Navy's early policy of tight-lipped silence about the war against the U-boats was responsible to a considerable degree for the lack of wider public understanding of the Coast Guard's part in that battle, but back of that was the devotion of most old-line Coast Guard officers to the maxim that "in our obscurity lies our security." They operated on the theory that the more you stick your neck out, the more likely you are to get shot at.

Something of that attitude prevailed in the service with regard to the awarding of medals, and for months after the war began you could count on your fingers the numbers of decorations given to Coast Guard men.



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“Why should we get medals?” demanded one crusty old skipper. “We’re only doing our job.”

Running this fabulous organization, which already has expanded to ten times its peacetime size, is salty, savvy Vice-Admiral Russell R. Waesche, the first man to be held over in the post of commandant of the organization for more than one four-year term.

A mild-mannered man, devoted to the idea that the Coast Guard’s principal concern in peace or war is safety at sea, Waesche has gone ahead quietly making it the deadliest life-saving organization in the United States military history. Yet despite the global scope of its operations, it conforms to the pattern and traditions maintained by the service throughout the 153 years since its establishment.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE FIRST FLEET

IT IS no idle boasting when Coast Guardsmen claim to belong to the United States' oldest naval service, for it can trace its unbroken history back to August 4, 1790, when Congress authorized the establishment of a Revenue Cutter Service for the collection of the young republic's urgently needed revenues.

In those early days, smuggling was rife along the coasts of the original colonies. In fact, it had a degree of respectability dating from the pre-Independence days when it had been considered quite proper, even patriotic, to avoid paying taxes to the British Crown.

Whatever might have been his sentiments toward making such contributions to the King of England, Alexander Hamilton, this country's first Secretary of the Treasury, knew full well that America could not get along without revenues. It needed every penny. He knew, too, that the only way to get all of the revenue due was to put a stop to smuggling, plug the leaks in the revenue dike. That meant government-owned ships.

Accordingly, after considerable discussion and letter-writing to the various Collectors of Customs, Hamilton

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recommended to Congress on April 22, 1790, that ten revenue cutters and crews be provided for this important work. Little more than three months later Congress acquiesced and, in due course, the first of the cutters, the *Massachusetts*, was launched. She was a 48-foot, 31-ton craft which carried a master, first, second and third mate, four mariners and two boys. Displacing about as much as our modern Navy's PT boats, she was nevertheless a speedy, seaworthy little ship.

Because smugglers always used to take advantage of high winds and shoal water, the *Massachusetts'* diminutive size and maneuverability made her an excellent vessel for her job.

For the first nine years of its existence, the Coast Guard was the only navy of which the United States could boast, and even after the creation of the Navy Department in 1798 one-third of the new United States Fleet at sea was made up of revenue cutters transferred to the Navy—the *Pickering*, the *Governor Jay*, the *Eagle*, the *Scammel*, the *South Carolina*, the *Governor Greene* and the *Diligence*, all found themselves under naval orders for the war with France.

They were strange little craft, armed with swivel guns, blunderbusses and cutlasses, when compared with the modern combat cutter of the Coast Guard, with its Diesel power, antiaircraft guns and underwater soundgear, but they established a memorable record, one which set a pattern for the traditions which are the pride of the service today.

Even as at present, the principal mission of the cutters in the initial months of the naval war with France was patrol

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—from the George's banks to Hatteras, it was their task to provide a defense against hostilities near the seacoast. This was in strict accord with the will of Congress, but it was not long before the cutters were doing much more than that. For in the first winter of the war, they were ordered into the Caribbean to clear the French out of the West Indies waters.

In another interesting parallel with the service performed by the Coast Guard cutters in World War II, those original cutters did a lot of convoy duty on the Spanish Main, escorting American merchantmen to safety with their cargoes of sugar, molasses and rum. One historian of the Coast Guard records, however, that their service was not entirely defensive—perhaps passive is a better word—for of the eighty-four ships captured between 1798 and 1800, the cutters were credited with taking eighteen either singlehanded or in company with some of the heavier naval ships. For example, the *Pickering* forced the surrender of *Le Conquise d'Egypt*, a ship carrying two hundred men and armed with eight 9-pounders and six 6-pounders, after a nine-hour fight off Guadalupe. Returning to the scene of her triumph on the Guadalupe station, however, the *Pickering* was lost without trace in August 1800.

Log books and other records of the early Treasury Fleet are practically nonexistent, but we know that despite the duties imposed by their service with the Navy, the cutters by no means abandoned their primary task of protecting the revenues of the Republic. Congress recognized the impor-

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tance of that task and authorized the construction of ten additional cutters in 1799 and, at the same time, directed that the cutters of the service should be distinguished by an ensign and pennant. Thus was born the Coast Guard ensign which, with little change in the ensuing 144 years, still flies at the masthead of every Coast Guard vessel. Its familiar sixteen red and white stripes represent the sixteen states in the Union in 1799, while the union of the ensign is the Arms of the United States with the thirteen stars, arrows and leaves on the olive branch symbolizing the original thirteen states.

In spite of its brilliant achievements in the war with France the nation's First Fleet fell upon dark days in the administration of President Thomas Jefferson. Retrenchment became the order of the day for the Cutter Service, some of the larger craft which had served with the Navy were auctioned off, to be replaced by smaller cutters, the number of officers and crews of others were reduced and every effort made to bring the service back to its original limits.

Paradoxically, however, it was a slump in shipping which brought about a rebirth of the Revenue Cutter Service.

Rather than fight the strangling restrictions which Britain and Napoleon imposed upon shipping with their opposing blockades, President Jefferson presented the world with the sorry spectacle of the United States surrendering the freedom of the seas in 1807. By Act of Congress, at Jefferson's request, no American ship larger than five tons could leave

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port except to proceed to another United States port and even trips of that restricted nature required a heavy bond.

The effect of that law upon the American merchant marine, of course, is obvious. Ships rotted at their wharves and seamen walked the streets.

On the other hand, the doldrums in trade provided a shot in the arm for the Cutter Service, for intent upon enforcing the Embargo Act, the Secretary of the Treasury called upon Congress for bigger and better cutters. In contrast to the 40-tonners of the original fleet, the new ones were to range from 70 to 130 tons and be swift enough to overhaul any quarry. And instead of \$1,000 apiece which the *Massachusetts* and her contemporaries cost, the estimates for the new ones ranged from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

The decision to build speed into the cutters to enable them to catch smugglers was a fortuitous circumstance because it proved to be their greatest weapon when they once more were called upon to side with the Navy in war—this time against the British fleet, for public condemnation of the Embargo Act and the demand for Free Trade and Sailors' Rights culminated in war with Britain in 1812.

Immediately, nine of the sixteen revenue cutters were transferred to the Navy and, as in a later day the cutter *Icarus* was to make the first capture of enemy prisoners off the east coast, the cutter *Jefferson* took the British brig *Patriot*, the first prize of the war.

In the years which followed the war of 1812, the revenue

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cutters inherited more and more varied duties for the government. Where it originally was directed only to collect and protect the Federal revenues and to enforce the quarantine regulations, the service successively became involved in the suppression of the slave trade, in enforcement of the United States' first Neutrality Law, in fighting the pirates and pseudo-privateers who made the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico places to be feared.

It was in 1831, however, that the cutters received the assignment which soon developed into the major peacetime concern of the service—the protection of life at sea. There is no clear record of what brought it about, but Secretary of the Treasury Louis McLane issued the order which put the Revenue Cutter Service and all its successors in the life-saving business. On December 16, 1831, he wrote to the Collector of Customs at Wilmington, Delaware, to prepare the cutter *Gallatin* for immediate duty at sea, explaining it was deemed desirable to have the government-owned ships render assistance to any vessels in distress along the coast. Several years later Congress formalized the policy of having public vessels render that sort of assistance and, except for periods of national emergency, such as the two World Wars, the Coast Guard has engaged in winter cruising during the period when merchant ships are most frequently in trouble all the way from Maine to Florida.

This was a long step forward, marking, as it did, the first governmental move to do something constructive toward the

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prevention of loss of life at sea. Up to that time, anything like salvage work had been on a strictly mercenary basis and, indeed, lawless gangs flourished on many a coast whose business in life was to lure ships to destruction by exhibiting false beacons and then plundering their cargoes once they were helplessly aground.

From its inception, the Coast Guard has contributed actively to the defense and growth of the United States. Whenever the young nation was involved in foreign wars, its revenue cutters have been among the earliest participants. The same is true where the country's domestic difficulties are concerned.

The Mexican War witnessed the first use of a group of the revenue cutters as a unit under the command of one of their own officers who, incidentally, were known from the earliest days of the service as Officers of the Customs. Captain John A. Webster, who commanded the cutter *Jackson*, was selected to establish a patrol along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico from the Mississippi to the Rio Grande soon after the war broke out.

With the steam cutters *Legare*, *Spencer* and *McLane* and the sailing cutters *Ewing*, *Woodbury*, *Van Buren* and *Forward* at his disposal, Captain Webster was instructed not only to keep a vigilant eye over the revenue, but to place himself under the direction of the general commanding the Army of Occupation "for the purpose of conveying men, supplies or intelligence to and from such points as he may



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direct; and should necessity require, of aiding with the forces employed on board in prosecuting the war."

The *Spencer*, whose namesake was to have such a brilliant part in the war against Nazi U-boats in World War II, had her war career brought to an inglorious end. Beset by mechanical trouble of one kind or another ever since her launching, she broke down three days out of New York on her way to rendezvous with the rest of the squadron and had to put into Charleston where she remained.

General Zachary Taylor, preparing for his march on Monterey, employed the cutters almost exclusively to transport his arms and ammunition from New Orleans to the Army Depot which he had established at Brazos Santiago and to carry his reports back to New Orleans. As the campaign progressed, however, the cutters saw a little more active service.

For instance, the *Forward* and *McLane* were in the expedition which Taylor sent against the defenses of Alvarado. Commodore Matthew Perry in the *Mississippi* commanded that force but his ship found it impossible to get in close enough to bring the Mexican shore defenses within range of her guns and the *McLane* went aground on the bar at the river's mouth. Considerably discomfited, Perry had to withdraw.

Down the coast at Frontera they had better luck, for the garrison of Fort Acceahappa abandoned their guns when the flotilla crossed the bar and it was able to sail up the Tobasco

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River to Tobasco where Taylor believed the enemy was bringing in munitions from Yucatan. They encountered stiff opposition at Tobasco but the combined effect of round shot and grape and the landing of a detachment of Marines proved too much for the Mexican defenders. After terms of surrender had been reached, the *Forward* and *McLane* were left on blockade duty off Frontera—a long voyage from their Atlantic coast stations.

When civil war engulfed the nation, the cutters once more were called into military service. Some of them fell into the hands of the Confederates but the majority were available to the Union and soon were engaged in prosecuting the blockade of Southern ports from the Chesapeake to the Rio Grande.

At the outset of the struggle, five of the cutters had been taken over by the Confederacy while eighteen others remained on duty in the Atlantic under the Stars and Stripes. Before the war was over, however, a total of forty-six cutters had seen service at one time or another on the Union side. Even with their added combat and blockade duties, though, the cutters did not unduly neglect their peacetime tasks of protecting the revenue, doing hydrographic survey work and aiding vessels in distress.

Amphibious warfare has had a prominent place in World War II. It has even come to be regarded by many as a modern development. Actually, it is almost as old as human conflict, certainly dating from the days when men learned to

## THE FIRST FLEET

fight on the water. One of the Union fleet's first operations in the Civil War was of that type and it bears mention here because of the part played by one of the cutters, the *Harriet Lane*, when plans went awry.

The cutter had been ordered to join Commodore Stringham's squadron for an assault on the twin Confederate forts guarding Hatteras Inlet. Many blockade runners had been using this passage to get their contraband cargoes through to the Secessionists and, likewise, Confederate raiders had used it to get from their bases to the northern shipping lanes.

On August 26 the expedition lay off the Inlet. It included three transports with 800 troops aboard. Landing operations were begun the next morning, but when only 300 of the soldiers had been put ashore, the bane of amphibious operations—high winds—struck. Landing barges and small boats were caught in the mounting seas and disaster was imminent. While the larger ships in the force stood out to sea for safety, it devolved upon the cutter to undertake the rescue work. Jettisoning her 32-pounders, which her skipper had wanted to replace anyway, she maneuvered through the shoreward-rushing waves and gathered up the struggling small craft.

The wind abated by daylight and the squadron steamed back and opened fire on the shore batteries and in two days the last of the opposition ceased. The Union had won its first victory of the war.

Because of the commonplace saying among Coast Guards-

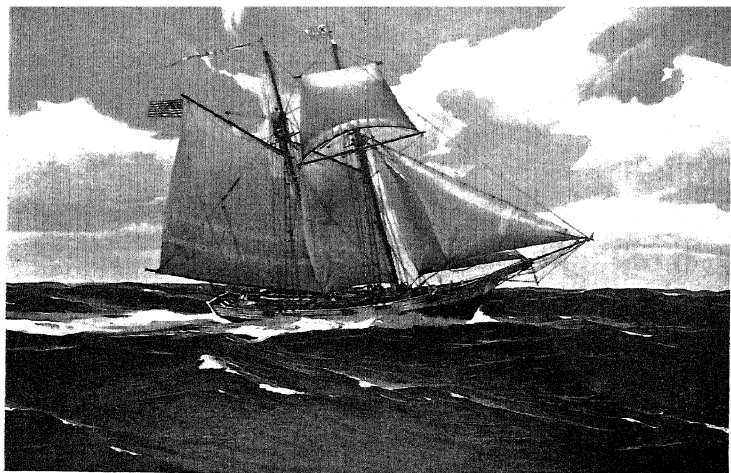
## FIRST FLEET

men that their service is always at war, it was no surprise to those on duty at the time when they were ordered to undertake the now-famous Bering Sea Patrol.

After Secretary of State Seward had negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia for some \$7,200,000—a transaction which some shortsighted critics denounced as “Seward’s Folly”—new and arduous duties were added to the Revenue Cutter Service. Year after year the ships of the service were assigned to transport various exploratory expeditions, both governmental and private, to Alaska. And year after year they had the duty of protecting American whalers and seal-hunters operating in the area, of policing the region against Japanese poachers and rendering assistance to the settlements ashore.

There’s a story which Navy and Coast Guard men today delight in telling to illustrate the long-range cunning of the Japs. One of our cutters was probing its way carefully through a fog-bound channel in Alaskan waters one day some years ago. Running at greatly reduced speed, and taking soundings with the lead line at frequent intervals, the cutter was barely making headway. Everybody aboard was jittery, fearful of tearing the bottom out of the ship on some uncharted volcanic ledge.

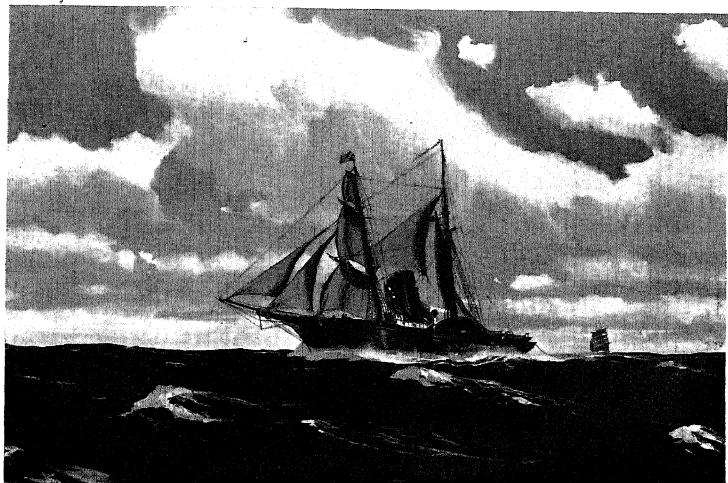
Suddenly astern of them a ship loomed up through the fog. It bore down on the cutter rapidly and, as the latter’s crew lined the rail with their mouths open, the newcomer flashed past and disappeared in the fog ahead. It was a



U. S. Coast Guard Photo

### "THE COAST GUARD—1791"

The *Massachusetts*, the start of the present Coast Guard fleet, is depicted in this oil painting by Chief Boatswain's Mate Hunter Wood, Coast Guard artist.



U. S. Coast Guard Photo

### THE "HARRIET LANE"

The *Harriet Lane*, first steam cutter in the U. S. Coast Guard, is shown as painted by Chief Boatswain's Mate Wood.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

### ANTISUBMARINE PATROL

Somewhere on the North Atlantic. . . Picturesque Coast Guard schooners manned by adventurous members of the Coast Guard Corsair Fleet sail along ever watchful for enemy submarine activity.

## THE FIRST FLEET

Japanese destroyer—and it churned through that hazardous passage as though it were operating in its own anchorage!

In the early days of the Bering Sea Patrol the cutters were the only symbol of law and order in the Alaskan territory. Their skippers, in fact, served as United States Commissioners and performed a great many legal tasks. They had a number of headaches, too, for their ships were not always maintained in the top-notch condition which is the standard of modern Coast Guard cutters. Penny-pinching policies on the part of the Treasury or of Congress often led to situations in which the cutters had to undertake their duties with inadequate equipment or insufficient personnel. It was many years, for example, before they were allowed to take surgeons along as part of their regular complement.

One of the most famous of the cutters engaged in the Bering Sea Patrol, of course, is the old *Bear*. Built in Scotland for service in the sealing industry, she was acquired by the United States Navy ten years later for the Greeley Relief Expedition. In 1886 she was transferred to the Revenue Marine, as the Treasury Fleet was then known. Year after year she crossed the Arctic Circle on her errands of mercy and justice, making a total of forty-two trips north and spending approximately seventy-five percent of her life in northern waters.

In 1926, after forty years in the service, it looked as though her career was finished, for she was condemned and decommissioned. In fact she served the city of Oakland as a marine

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museum for a time. However she was rescued from that ignominious fate to take Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd's expedition to the Antarctic, and just before the United States got into World War II she turned up in the public prints again as a member of the Coast Guard's Greenland Patrol when she escorted the captured Norwegian hunting ship *Busko* into Boston, the first naval prize resulting from the war in Europe.

One of the most thrilling exploits of the old Revenue Cutter Service was the expedition which the cutter *Bear* sent while on the Bering Sea Patrol to rescue some 500 American whalers whose ships had been trapped in the ice near Point Barrow, Alaska.

The *Bear* already had gone back to the United States for the winter when word reached San Francisco in November, 1897, that the whaling ships were icebound and their crews faced starvation unless food supplies reached them before their own limited stocks were exhausted.

There were no airplanes to hop over and parachute supplies to the distressed group in those days and with the Arctic and Bering Sea approaches already closed to navigation, the difficulties confronting a relief expedition were regarded as almost insuperable by experienced Arctic explorers. However, it was thought that if anyone could reach the marooned whalers, Captain Francis Tuttle, commander of the *Bear*, could do it. He had had long experience in maneuvering the ship in Arctic ice which well qualified him for the task.



## THE FIRST FLEET

It took them three weeks to outfit the ship and sign up a volunteer crew, but Captain Tuttle sailed from Port Townsend, Washington, on November 30, 1897, headed for Cape Nome, on the Bering Sea, a point about 800 miles from where the whaling ships were fast in the ice.

When the *Bear* got within eighty-five miles of her goal, the ice pack was found to be impassable, so Tuttle returned to Cape Vancouver where he put a detachment ashore with instructions to undertake one of the most difficult overland journeys imaginable. The group was headed by two of the cutter's ablest officers, First Lieutenant D. H. Jarvis, commanding, and Second Lieutenant E. P. Bertholf. Surgeon S. J. Call, a Russian guide named Koltchoff and four Eskimos completed the party. They had thirteen hundred pounds of food and equipment loaded on four sleds which were hauled by forty-one half-wild huskies. Meanwhile, the *Bear* sailed southward to Unalaska in the Aleutians where Captain Tuttle planned to wait until the following summer when he would be able to get through to Point Barrow and pick up his relief expedition as well as any of the whalers who might have lost their ships by that time.

On December 16 Jarvis and his party set out from the village of Tannak for a trip across 1,500 miles of incredibly difficult territory. How to take sufficient food along for themselves and the 500 whalers, enough to last for eight months, was a problem that had only one solution. They could not expect their dogs to haul any such load so the only

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answer was to drive sufficient reindeer ahead of them and slaughter them for food when they reached Point Barrow. The reindeer, recently imported to Alaska from Siberia, was the only food animal that could survive the Arctic winter.

It took them some time to assemble the herds of reindeer and to recruit experienced natives who could handle both the reindeer and the dog teams, but finally it was done and the cuttermen, who had been seamen all their lives, set out on a strange adventure, one in which they had to serve as sled drivers, reindeer herders and Arctic explorers. It was a three-month job to travel the 1,500 miles overland to Point Barrow in the dead of winter, and every hardship and danger usually to be encountered under such conditions was theirs.

Lunches beside the trail were grim affairs in which they ate cold ham and hard bread, washed down with ice water. Soft deep snow and frequent blinding blizzards slowed them down a great deal. When the men weren't breaking trail for the dogs in the deep snowdrifts, the animals were being tortured by sharp ice which cut their paws to ribbons.

Early in the game the expedition divided because of the difficulty of obtaining relief dogs. Jarvis and Surgeon Call took half the party and the best dogs and mushed on around the Seward Peninsula for the purpose of obtaining additional reindeer. Bertholf and Koltchoff took the worn-out dogs and took a short cut to Cape Blossom on Kotzebue Sound. Bertholf had about a thousand pounds of provisions in his party so it was vital to Jarvis and the others that he be able

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to negotiate the desolate mountain area and reach Cape Blossom where Jarvis was to rejoin him.

"Lieutenant Jarvis on the first lap of the journey around Seward Peninsula arrived at Golovin Bay on January 11, where the dog teams were dismissed," a Coast Guard account of the expedition said. "From here on, Lapland freight sleds, pulled by reindeer, were used for transportation. The rescuers, not yet halfway to Point Barrow, faced further trials and tribulations. It was difficult to drive hundreds of jittery reindeer in a lashing gale at 40 degrees below zero. The men were forced to go native; to eat and sleep with the Eskimos who were not a cleanly lot.

"Wolf packs began to attack them, necessitating a constant watch. Gales and blinding snowstorms hampered their progress. On one occasion, Jarvis, who brought up the rear of his party, was lost in the darkness when his reindeer ran the sled against a stump, broke their harness and ran away. The expedition's commander, left on the trail with only his sled and his sleeping bag, turned in, hoping that his absence would be discovered by the others before he was overcome by the cold. His reindeer caught up with the rest of the party and trotted behind in the darkness, with Jarvis' absence unnoticed until the natives stopped to consult with the chief, only to find him missing. They backtracked and eventually found Jarvis."

Much to Jarvis' relief, he found Bertholf already waiting for him at Cape Blossom when he arrived on February 12.

## FIRST FLEET

They still had a week's journey ahead of them before they could get to Point Hope, where they expected to find some word from the whalemén at Barrow.

"We left Cape Blossom in ideal weather—42 degrees below zero," Jarvis noted. He probably meant that at least it wasn't snowing.

On February 20 they reached Point Hope where they found a man, Ned Arey, who had arrived from Point Barrow only twenty-four hours ahead of them with word that the whalemén's condition would become serious within a month unless food reached them. Jarvis and his men spent the next two weeks preparing for the final 400-mile stage of the journey.

"The rescuers set out from Point Hope on March 6th," the account said. "At Cape Lisburne, about 35 miles further on, it was black as night and the weather was thick. A howling blizzard came down from the north, filling the air with quantities of fine, hard snow that cut like a knife and hid everything from sight, even a few feet away. Dog food was running short, and the half-famished huskies began to eat everything that was not metal or wood. Boots and shoes had to be put out of reach lest the dogs add them to their limited menu. Point Belcher was reached on March 25, leaving about one hundred miles to Point Barrow. The next day Jarvis was rewarded by finding the first marooned whale-ship, the *Belvidere*, near Sea Horse Island. On board were a number of the survivors of the crushed *Orca* and the lost

## THE FIRST FLEET

*Freeman*. However, Jarvis did not linger long. His indomitable courage and driving sense of duty started him on the trail again the following morning."

It was March 29, almost three and one-half months after leaving the *Bear*, that Jarvis, Bertholf and Call drove the reindeer herd into Point Barrow, successfully completing one of the greatest arctic journeys ever attempted.

"On his arrival, Lieutenant Jarvis sent messages to all the masters of the whale ships," the Coast Guard report said, "acquainting them with the arrival of the expedition and asking their co-operation. He found the whalers in a low, demoralized state from the cramped quarters, idleness and inadequate food. Filth and vermin covered everything. Dr. Call found four cases of scurvy. New quarters were found or constructed for the men. Sanitary rules and general discipline were instituted, with daily inspections."

Jarvis had instructions from Captain Tuttle to take charge of the colony in the name of the government if he found conditions serious enough to warrant such a step. He was to "organize the community for mutual support and good order. The provisions must be apportioned and as many reindeer slaughtered for food as necessary to make all hold out until August, 1898, when the *Bear* should arrive."

Jarvis followed that plan and all hands settled down to await the summer "breakup" when the whaling ships would be released from their imprisonment and could head toward the open sea.

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Surgeon Call was kept busy throughout the winter attending to the needs of both the whites and the natives and his practice ranged from treatment of frostbite to major amputations. He treated 1,557 cases of various types between the time of his arrival at Point Barrow and the appearance of the *Bear* on July 28. Nine and one-half months after she set out upon the expedition, the *Bear* was back at Seattle with ninety-seven whalemens whose ships had been wrecked or sunk.

It was a successful finale to one of the strangest assignments ever carried out by the Revenue Cutter Service.

In peacetime the cutters used to base at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians and often covered as much as 75,000 miles in their cruising from April to November.

From the earliest days of the Republic, it has been the Coast Guard's function to serve with the Navy in wartime, and the Spanish-American War was no exception. Twenty revenue cutters saw service against the Spaniards, one of them—the *McCulloch*—was with Dewey at the Battle of Manila. Others had even more exciting assignments in the Atlantic, engaging in cable-cutting expeditions, piloting traffic through the mine fields with which the Army protected the nation's major ports from Boston to New Orleans against the possibility of surprise attacks by Cervera's fleet.

Between the close of the war with Spain and the night of April 14-15, 1912, the Revenue Cutter Service seems to have pursued a more or less routine existence, carrying out its ap-

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pointed peacetime duties and not creating much of a stir one way or another. There were, doubtless, the usual arduous patrols in weather which no other vessels willingly would operate in and the stirring rescues which somehow the general public seemed to take for granted.

On that April night, however, something happened which was to focus international attention on the United States Coast Guard. The proud White Star liner *Titanic* struck an iceberg on her maiden voyage four hundred miles southeast of Cape Race and sank with a loss of more than 1,500 persons.

Icebergs had long been the dread of transatlantic navigators, for they had spelled the doom of many a ship. But the loss of the *Titanic*, which still ranks as one of the worst peacetime maritime disasters, precipitated a demand for preventive measures which could not be denied.

Clearly, some means of warning vessels operating in the danger zone of the location and course of the bergs must be found and, quite as obviously, that would entail a patrol.

While the ponderous machinery for getting some international action in the matter was slowly beginning to move, two United States Navy scout cruisers took on the job for the remainder of the year. In the following spring the Treasury Department undertook the patrol, assigning the cutters *Seneca* and *Miami* to the task. In the same year, the British government chartered a steam trawler, the *Scotia*, for ice and weather-observation work.

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Finally, on November 12, 1913, the International Conference on the Safety of Life at Sea got down to work on the problem at London and thoroughly discussed the subject of patrolling the ice regions. The upshot was that a convention, providing for the inauguration of an international derelict-destruction, ice observation and ice patrol, was signed on January 20, 1914, by the representatives of the various maritime powers.

The plan called for the assignment of two vessels to the duty each season and the United States was asked to manage the triple service, the expense of which would be borne by the thirteen countries most interested in transatlantic navigation.

The contracting governments agreed to contribute to the maintenance and operation of the service in the following proportions:

Belgium .....	2%
Canada .....	3%
Denmark .....	2%
France .....	6%
Germany .....	10%
Great Britain and Northern Ireland .....	40%
Italy .....	6%
Japan .....	1%
Netherlands .....	5%
Norway .....	3%
Spain .....	1%
Sweden .....	2%
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics .....	1%
United States of America .....	18%



## THE FIRST FLEET

Although the convention did not go into effect until July 1, 1915, the United States agreed to undertake the work immediately under the terms agreed upon in the convention.

Consequently, in February of 1914 the service was initiated, and except for wartime interruptions has been maintained ever since. How effective it has been is witnessed by the fact that not a single life has been lost as a result of a ship's collision with an iceberg since that time.

The iceberg menace starts up in Greenland on the glacial icecap of that Arctic island. As this river of ice moves toward the coast, huge masses of it, frequently as long as a city block and half as high as the Washington Monument, break off and go thundering into the sea to be swept southward by the ocean currents. Some of them reach the so-called Labrador current and it is those which constitute the gravest menace to mariners, for that current frequently sweeps them steadily into the heavily traveled North Atlantic steamer lanes.

Experience and experiment have shown that it is beyond human power to divert or destroy them. The best that can be done is to watch and chronicle their movements.

The Coast Guard found out, both through its own experiments and through those of other experts, that it was useless to try to destroy large bergs with explosives and that the action of the sea would accomplish the objective in amazingly short order if given a chance. The thing to do, then, was simply to locate the icebergs, note their courses and

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speeds and warn shipping to be on the lookout accordingly.

And that is what the International Ice Patrol seeks to do. Each year, about March 15—except in wartime, when they have other duties—two of the Coast Guard's big, 327-foot cutters slip their moorings at their Staten Island pier and glide down the bay toward the grim, gray Atlantic and set a course for the danger zone.

Their patrol area is in the general vicinity of the famous Grand Banks off Newfoundland, an area approximately the size of the state of Pennsylvania.

The cutters alternate on the patrol, staying out fifteen days at a time. When one is out, the other bases either at St. John's or some other near-by port. Because the ice area is close to where the Gulf Stream meets the cold Labrador current, it is usually shrouded in dense fog for much of the ice season—April to July—and this makes the cutters' task doubly difficult and dangerous.

While on the ice patrol, the cutters render many other services so long as they don't interfere with the primary mission. For example, they often give medical aid to the crews of the numerous small fishing vessels which operate in that area, or assist vessels which get into difficulties in bad weather. Scientific observations of many kinds also are made, either by the cutters' own personnel or by experts who accompany them.

Among these extracurricular activities, as it were, are the studies of conditions in the upper atmosphere, made for the

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purpose of obtaining more accurate data on flying weather conditions. Since the advent of transoceanic passenger-plane flights, this has become a vitally important activity, and before the war engulfed the United States, cutters other than those engaged on the ice patrol were stationed in mid-ocean to make the observations on a daily basis.

The data is obtained by means of the radiosonde, a miniature broadcasting station which weighs less than two pounds and which is sent into the upper air by means of a carrier balloon. Its signals, recorded by receiving apparatus aboard the cutter, give temperature, barometric pressure and humidity at various levels. Some of the balloons ascend ten miles or more before they burst; in 1939 the Ice Patrol cutters made observations recorded as much as fifteen miles above the earth's surface. Temperatures as low as -60 degrees (centigrade) were recorded.

Details concerning the whereabouts and movements of icebergs and ice fields are communicated by the cutters to the Hydrographic Office of the Navy Department for dissemination to shipping interests. In 1940 the cutter *Northland* made an oceanographic cruise of 3,300 miles which threw considerable light on the origin of icebergs, the conditions surrounding and influencing their drift into southern waters. On this cruise, which took the *Northland* to Baffin Bay and Davis Straits, a total of 3,289 icebergs were sighted and plotted and the five principal producing glaciers in

## FIRST FLEET

Greenland were visited for the purpose of making oceanographic studies.

Strangely enough, there was an almost total absence of icebergs in the North Atlantic steamer lanes that year—a condition which had prevailed in only four other years since the patrol began—whereas in 1939 the menace of icebergs in those lanes persisted as late as August.

### CHAPTER THREE

## THE TURNING POINT

IT LOOKS now as though the Coast Guard were here to stay—but this was by no means always the case. Despite its long record of meritorious service, both in peace and war, the service has repeatedly been the target of attempts either to abolish it or merge it with the Navy. This was particularly true of the old Revenue Cutter Service, but even today we see indications of the same tendency.

Shortly after the training of merchant sea cadets was assigned to the Coast Guard as a means of providing competent crews for the growing war-born fleet of American cargo vessels, surprised officials learned one day that legislation had been passed by Congress transferring the training program to the War Shipping Administration.

The training of large numbers of merchant seamen might properly be described as an emergency measure and one which the government would not be warranted in financing in normal times; therefore the assignment of the task to a patently emergency organization such as the War Shipping Administration can be easily understood. It is not so easy to explain, however, the attempt which is being made in Con-

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gress as this is written to give the WSA the Coast Guard's Marine Inspection duties also.

Marine Inspection, whether carried on by the Coast Guard or, as formerly was the case, by a division of the Commerce Department, is something that the government will have to do as long as the United States has a merchant marine. It is not something that will end with the war. This fact led some friends of the Coast Guard to express the belief that the effort to transfer more and more duties of a permanent nature to the temporary War Shipping Administration was designed to give the latter reasons for continuing its existence after the war.

Economy usually has been the argument used by advocates of the Coast Guard's abolition, and even of those who wanted to merge it with the Navy. The last major attempt of that nature occurred toward the close of 1911 as a result of the recommendations of a Commission on Economy and Efficiency appointed by President Taft, overriding the Treasury's contention that it needed a coastal patrol for the same reason that Alexander Hamilton urged Congress to give him ten cutters back in 1790—namely, to protect the nation's revenue by preventing smuggling.

"The commission is convinced," said the 120-page report with unflattering finality, "that the Service has not a single duty or function that cannot be performed by some other existing service, and be performed by the latter at much smaller expense."

## THE TURNING POINT

While conceding that smuggling did constitute something of a problem at certain points on the coast line, the Commission said it felt sure the Navy could easily handle it.

Like so many other economy advocates, the Commission probably had visions of the Navy's ships lying around virtually idle in peacetime when they might well be doing the chores assigned to the Revenue Cutters. It is perfectly true that a destroyer can perform just about any of the patrol or similar duties of the cutters. But the reverse is not true. Cutters can't take the place of destroyers. They are not fast enough to travel with or ahead of the fleet, for example, and they are not equipped with torpedo tubes or with the complex fire-control equipment which the modern destroyer must have. Since the Navy must be ready for war at all times, it follows that a much larger complement of men would be required to operate a destroyer, even on cutter duty, than the cutters themselves would require. So, actually it would be inefficient and certainly uneconomical to put a destroyer on cutter duty. A much more economical procedure would be to decommission such destroyers as the Navy did not require in peacetime, and leave the Coast Guard and revenue-protection duties to cutters.

However, several Secretaries of the Navy have recommended from time to time that the Coast Guard's duties be turned over to the Navy, contending that the execution of those duties would provide admirable peacetime training for naval personnel.

## FIRST FLEET

Not only did the Commission side with that viewpoint, but President Taft gave the Commission's report his approval and sent it to Congress with a request for authority to carry out its recommendations. These proposed not only that the Cutter Service be transferred to the Department of Commerce and Labor, but that the Lifesaving Service be taken from the Treasury Department and merged with the Commerce Department's Lighthouse Bureau.

The Lifesaving Service, which by that time had earned the reputation of being the finest of its kind in the world, had been a separate bureau in the Treasury Department since 1878. It was only after a hectic existence of some thirty years that it attained that dignified status.

In the early days of the Republic, the government had not evolved to the place where it accepted any responsibility for the rescue of mariners in distress on our shores, although they existed in numbers which increased almost in direct proportion to the growth of overseas and coastwise trade. We have seen that the first step in the direction of aid for mariners in distress was taken in 1837 when Congress established the Winter Cruising assignments for the Revenue Cutters with instructions to render such assistance to ships in distress as lay within their power. While this was a long step in the right direction, it was not of much benefit to the men on ships which happened to run aground before the cutters could help them out of their plights. The Massachusetts Humane Society, organized in 1785, demonstrated



## THE TURNING POINT

that at least certain segments of the public were conscious of the problem, but the demonstration consisted only of the construction of huts which were little more than shacks along the coastline of the Bay State to which survivors of shipwrecks could repair for shelter.

It was not until 1847 that Congress took any action in the matter and then it limited itself to appropriating \$5,000 to the Treasury Department for the purpose of "furnishing the lighthouses on the Atlantic Coast with means of rendering assistance to shipwrecked mariners."

In the following year, however, Congress was stirred into the acquisition of surfboats and other equipment after it was told that in the preceding nine years, more than 300 ships had been wrecked on the coasts of Long Island and New Jersey. No figures as to the loss of life in those ships were provided, but it can be presumed that it was heavy.

An appropriation of \$10,000 was made to the Treasury this time for the purchase of the boats, rockets and other equipment and Captain Douglas Ottinger of the Revenue Marine Service, inventor of a "life-car," a torpedolike conveyance in which several persons could be hauled through the surf from wrecked vessels rather than through the air as in the breeches buoy, was assigned to use the money for the construction and equipment of eight lifesaving stations—the first of their type in the country's history.

They were simple affairs and contained only a minimum of equipment. After all, not a great deal could be expected,

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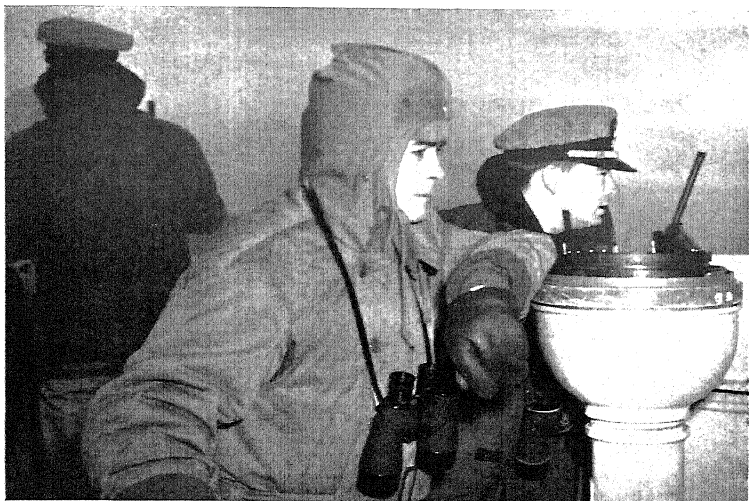
even in those days, for \$1,250. At any rate, they did not solve the problem.

In the first place, Congress made no provision for the maintenance of the boathouses after they were built and equipped. Captain Ottinger turned the keys of the structures over to persons in each community whom he regarded as responsible, and there the government stepped out of the picture. Consequently, it is not surprising that what was not stolen outright from the boathouses soon fell into such a state of disrepair as to be worthless.

Congress next tried to alleviate that situation by authorizing the Treasury to rehabilitate the stations and put keepers in charge of each at a salary of \$200 annually! Another half-hearted measure.

It was not until 1871 that the Lifesaving Service began to amount to something, started out on the course which was to win it international recognition for efficiency and courage. That was when Sumner I. Kimball, newly appointed chief of the Revenue Marine Division of the Treasury, took charge of the boathouses. He found the system in deplorable shape. Many of the boathouses themselves had again become dilapidated, nothing that could be carried away was left at some of them, a number of the keepers were either too old or unqualified for their jobs.

Kimball was up against a tough proposition but it was a challenge he accepted with gusto, for the tremendous potential importance of the system was clear to him. Some idea



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### SUB-SINKING SKIPPER OF THE COAST GUARD'S "CAMPBELL"

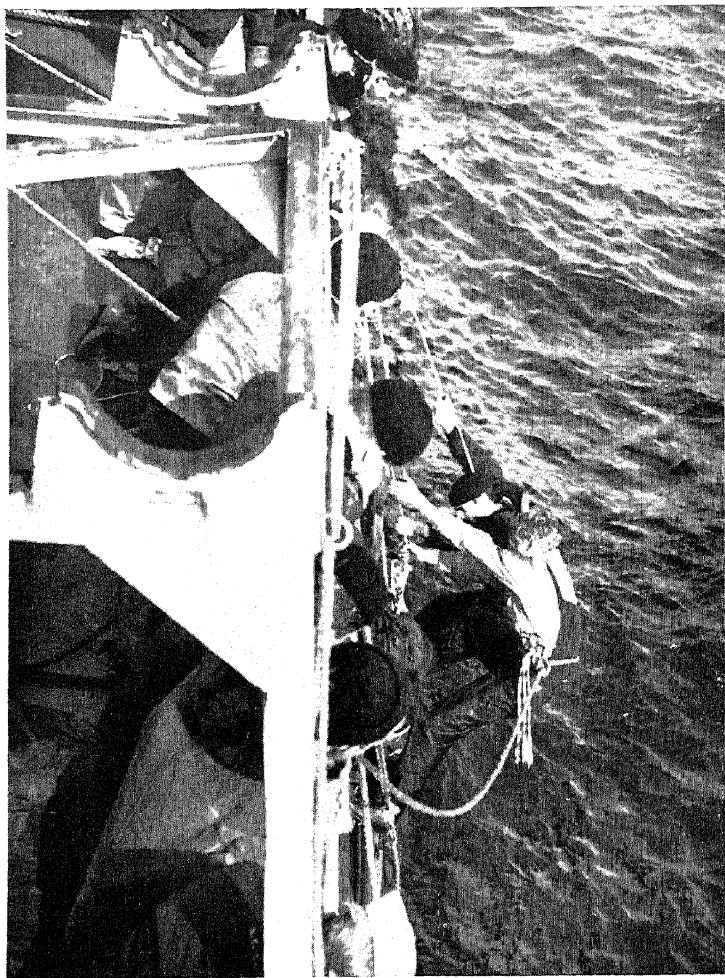
Commander James A. Hirshfield on the bridge of his ship as he scrutinizes the sea. He has since been made a Captain.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### REPAIR OF SUB-RAMMING "CAMPBELL"

In an effort to close the hole in the Coast Guard cutter's side caused when she rammed the Nazi sub Coast Guardsmen dive over the side into icy Atlantic waters.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

### THE ICY ATLANTIC LAPPING AT THEIR FEET . . .

. . . Coast Guardsmen work with calculated haste to repair the hole in the side of the Coast Guard cutter *Campbell* caused by ramming a Nazi U-boat. All the men over the side wore life lines, but none of them fell into the water.

A tug towed the *Campbell* 800 miles to an unnamed eastern-coast port.

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of the conviction he felt in the matter may be gleaned from the fact that he talked Congress into appropriating \$200,000 to put the Lifesaving Service on a workmanlike basis. Among other things, he used the money to replace the volunteers with surfmen paid a maximum of forty dollars monthly.

So successful were his efforts, so well did the revamped system work, that not a single life was lost during the first year in the patrolled areas. The fact that this splendid showing was no mere flash in the pan, not just a case of a new broom sweeping clean, is borne out by the action of the International Lifesaving Congress at Toulon in 1890 in declaring the United States' Lifesaving Service "the best and most complete" in existence.

Doubtless Congress was cognizant of this fine record and of the fact that Revenue Cutter Service officers had a part in its establishment when they were considering President Taft's request for abolition of the Cutter Service and merger of the Lifesaving and Lighthouse services. At any rate, Senator Townsend of Michigan proposed instead that the Revenue Cutter Service and the Lifesaving Service be combined in a new organization to be known as the United States Coast Guard and he introduced legislation to carry out his proposal.

Although the operating heads of both services seized on the idea as a happy solution to the problem and testified jointly in favor of it before Congressional committees, it took

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almost two years for Congress to make up its mind finally on the matter. However, in the end the decision was made in favor of Senator Townsend's bill and on January 28, 1915, President Woodrow Wilson signed the measure into law.

Little more than two years of operation under the new arrangement was vouchsafed the Coast Guard, however, before it once more was a part of the Navy in keeping with its traditional function in time of war. On the morning of April 6, 1917—just a few hours after the dramatic scene in the House of Representatives when the war resolution pitted the United States on the side of the Allies in the battle to “make the world safe for democracy”—a three-word message was flashed to every ship and shore station of the Coast Guard. The message said cryptically: “Plan One. Acknowledge.”

In brief, “Plan One” put the ships and men of the Coast Guard, until the moment of the message's dispatch operating as a unit of the Treasury, into the United States Navy for the “duration.” It had happened before, and as we know, it happened again a quarter of a century later. In 1917 it meant an immediate addition to the fleet of 47 vessels of all classes and in readiness for sea, plus 223 experienced and highly trained commissioned officers and 4,500 men.

As in every other prior war in which the United States was involved, the Coast Guard served with distinction in World War I. In fact, its losses in officers and men were greater by percentage than those of any other branch of this

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country's armed forces. Six of its cutters constituted a squadron of the Atlantic Fleet's patrol forces on duty in European waters, escorting hundreds of ships between Gibraltar and the British Isles and also doing antisubmarine duty in the Mediterranean. An impressive number of Coast Guard officers were assigned to command posts with the Navy.

Although the war at sea in 1917-1918 did not compare in scope or violence with that of World War II, the Coast Guard had many notable exploits to its credit.

"No single instance that occurred afloat during the war," said an official report, "is more indicative of the devotion to duty and the earnest desire to get together and win the war that inspired our naval forces than the gallant attempt to salvage the torpedoed steamer *Wellington*."

The *Wellington* was a British collier. On September 16, 1918, she was en route from Milford Haven, Wales, to Gibraltar in a convoy when a torpedo struck on her starboard bow, tearing away her forefoot and flooding No. 1 hold. The submarine came up for a quick look at her handiwork and then disappeared.

The *Wellington's* crew refused to stay aboard, although it appeared to her officers that she probably would float for some time, and took to the boats immediately. The Coast Guard cutter *Seneca*, meanwhile, was standing by trying to protect the rest of the convoy from another possible attack by the U-boat and to look out for the survivors.

When the *Seneca* received a message from one of the *Wel-*

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*Wellington's* boats, telling of the condition of the ship and the prospects that it might stay afloat, Lieutenant F. W. Brown, the cutter's navigating officer, asked permission to take a volunteer crew aboard the collier and try to work her into port. There was no scarcity of volunteers and just as soon as some of the *Wellington's* crew scrambled out of one of their boats to the cutter's deck, the Coast Guardsmen dropped into the same boat and pulled away for the crippled ship. They had just got aboard the *Wellington* when the master, the first and second officers and eleven members of the crew came back on board.

Because protection of the rest of the convoy came first, the *Seneca* was forced to shove off and leave the *Wellington* to her uncertain fate. The fact that the *Seneca* appears to have been that convoy's sole escort is not the only striking contrast the incident offers between the convoy duty of that day and the present time, for the official report shows that the *Seneca*, on leaving the scene, "sent out radio calls for urgent assistance for the *Wellington*."

With the cutter's departure, there began a heroic effort by Brown and his men to save the large and valuable cargo steamer.

Little more than an hour after the torpedo struck, they had steam up and had effected slight repairs to the air pump. A course was laid for Brest, France, and the damaged vessel got under way. With her No. 1 hold flooded, the *Wellington* was badly down by the head and consequently difficult to



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manage. While the sea remained calm, all went well. The greatest problem was keeping the water from rising in No. 2 hold; the ship had to be stopped several times during the afternoon of the first day to permit the pumps to work under a full head of steam.

About sundown, however, the wind and sea increased, gradually making it impossible to keep the *Wellington* on her course. She persisted in swinging head on into the seas which, in her damaged condition forward, was the last thing Lieutenant Brown wanted to happen. Using every available trick in the Coast Guard's rather complete repertoire, he tried to maneuver her stern to the sea but failed. He lacked the one device which might have made such a maneuver possible—a sea anchor—and there was nothing aboard that could be used to make one. A sea anchor is simply a drag which, attached to one end of a ship and thrown overboard, tends to pull that end in the direction in which the seas are running, or in other words, away from the sea. The *Wellington* was equipped with steel spars, unfortunately, or Brown would have been able to use a wooden mast for the purpose.

When the ship refused to answer the rudder, Brown was forced to stop; it quickly became apparent that instead of the problem of getting the *Wellington* into port, they now were faced with the task of saving their own lives. Early in the day, construction of a large life raft had been started on the No. 3 hatch and there was one lifeboat available. It had

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been rigged outboard for speedy lowering but the davits, of a type peculiar to ships of turret construction, were in a horizontal position and, because of the heavy list and excessive rolling, threatened to force the lifeboat under on the down roll.

If they were to make use of that boat, Brown knew they had to act promptly. All hands except the radioman and three men operating the pumps were ordered abreast of the lifeboat and told to get it into the water, but to try to hold onto the ship by means of a long sea painter. Seven men belonging to the *Wellington's* crew got into the boat along with one of the *Seneca's* men who was ordered to unhook the forward fall. The rest of the Coast Guardsmen—Brown had eighteen and one petty officer all told in his volunteer party—stood by to clear away and lower the boat.

"Can there be any greater proof of the splendid spirit of discipline that animated the men of the *Seneca*?" asked the official account.

They got the boat launched all right, but Brown's plan to hold it fairly close to the ship so that all hands might ultimately reach it went askew because one of the ship's crew cut the painter, apparently fearing the high seas would fling the boat against the ship's hull and swamp them. The *Wellington's* first officer was in charge in the lifeboat and he made an effort to work it back to the ship, but his men didn't know how to row in such seas and they drifted away,

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leaving those on the ship with nothing but their makeshift raft to rely upon.

Meanwhile, a U. S. destroyer, the *Warrington*, was coming to the rescue at full speed; about 2.30 A.M., rockets answering those being sent up from the *Wellington* at fifteen-minute intervals were seen. Brown previously had notified the destroyer that his only lifeboat was adrift and requested that its occupants be picked up. This was done, but the lifeboat was crushed against the destroyer's side. Lieutenant Commander Van der Veer, the destroyer's skipper, tried to get one of his own boats into the water to attempt to take Brown and the others off the *Wellington*, but gave up the idea after two of his men had narrow escapes from serious injury. He figured it would be only so many more men in the water.

Aboard the *Wellington*, Brown had searched the deck with the aid of a flashlight and located several long planks from which they fashioned three rafts. These they lowered over the port quarter and secured by lines which the men could use to reach them in the darkness.

Using the flashlight, Brown signaled the destroyer that he had to abandon ship immediately and asked the "tin can" to work in close so as to pick up his men as quickly as possible. The wind had reached gale strength by this time. Suddenly the ship started settling rapidly by the head and turning on one side at the same time.

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Brown crawled out over the railing at her stern and flashed a last message to the *Warrington*:

"My men are in the water."

Scarcely had he finished signaling when the stricken ship seemed to rise as if in a final effort to avert her fate—apparently her boilers exploded beneath the surface—then lurched into her death plunge. Brown sprang into the angry sea.

Even while struggling for life itself, he remained the exemplary officer, thinking always of his men. He swam around in the inky darkness for a time, hoping to find some piece of wreckage or a raft. A cry for help near by attracted him and he swam toward the man. Finding him already clinging to a plank, Brown advised the seaman to keep his mouth closed so as not to fill it with sea water. Then he saw two calcium lights burning in their metal containers. Thinking they marked a raft, he swam toward them but found nothing but the lights. Rather than use them to mark his own position, he extinguished them so that others would not waste their strength trying to reach them in the belief that they were on a raft.

In the darkness the destroyer loomed up near. Still thinking of his crew and obviously realizing that his own strength was waning, Brown kept calling out:

"I had eighteen men. I had eighteen men."

He was hauled to safety but promptly lost consciousness and was not identified for some time.

A fact about this disaster which highlights the value of the

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little red lights which are now affixed to all life jackets is that the *Warrington* had to wait for dawn before she could find the survivors of Brown's party and the *Wellington's* crew. They finally picked up eight, including Brown, from rafts, buoys and floating wreckage. Three of the destroyer's crew were recommended for lifesaving medals for having jumped into the turbulent seas with life lines around their waists trying to rescue some of the victims.

The heroism of one of the Coast Guardsmen in the water also won high praise. Seaman James O. Osborne, supporting a shipmate, Coxswain Peterson, swam to a small raft and placed the semiconscious Peterson aboard. Then he climbed on and tried to hold Peterson between his feet. Several times both were hurled off the raft, but each time Osborne went to Peterson's assistance and replaced him on the raft.

Finally, when he could see the destroyer, he semaphored this message from his wobbly perch:

"I am all right, but he is gone unless you come right away."

The destroyer saved them both.

Although this episode ended tragically and unsuccessfully, costing the lives of one petty officer and ten enlisted men of the Coast Guard as well as five of the *Wellington's* crew, it was in the best tradition of the Coast Guard, a sterling example of high courage and good discipline.

The cutter *Seneca* figured in a couple of other exploits which reflected credit on her commander and crew and

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helped to focus the attention of the proud British navy upon the good job the Coast Guard was doing in the war at sea.

On April 16, 1918, the *Seneca* left Milford Haven with a convoy for Gibraltar. After dark one night a week later, the danger-zone escort from Gibraltar, including the British patrol sloop *Cowslip*, joined the *Seneca* to help shepherd the merchant ships past the submarine-infested approaches to the Mediterranean. Nothing untoward happened for several days and then, about 2:45 A.M. on April 28, those aboard the *Seneca* heard a loud explosion. Immediately the *Cowslip* displayed distress signals.

The established procedure in such circumstances was for vessels in the vicinity of torpedoed ships to do nothing that would jeopardize themselves; rescue of survivors should be considered as a secondary duty. However, the United States Coast Guard is so thoroughly indoctrinated in the protection of life at sea that Captain William J. Wheeler, skipper of the *Seneca*, could not stand by without making some effort to rescue the personnel of the *Cowslip* despite the fact that the latter's commander repeatedly flashed the signal "Stay away. Submarine in sight port quarter."

The *Seneca* circled the *Cowslip* in search of the submarine, and the destroyer *Dale* also joined in the hunt. Instead of limiting himself to trying to find the U-boat and to protecting the rest of the convoy, Captain Wheeler approached the *Cowslip* three times and stopped dead in the water while taking off survivors. Each time he stopped, of course, his

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ship was in grave danger of being made another target by the sub, but in spite of that, Wheeler managed to rescue the sloop's skipper and one other commissioned officer and seventy-nine enlisted men. Many of them might have followed their shipmates to watery graves had they been forced to spend the rest of the night in the water.

Although Wheeler's action was a rather flagrant violation of the accepted doctrine, he was commended not only by his squadron commander but by Admiral Sims, commander in chief of U. S. naval forces in European waters, and by the British admiral at Gibraltar.

The following June, Wheeler gave a somewhat similar repetition of that performance when the British steamer *Queen*, in a convoy bound from England to Gibraltar, was torpedoed and sunk in about five minutes. Again disregarding the usual procedure, but using depth charges and shell-fire to keep the U-boat from surfacing, Wheeler boldly approached the *Queen* and picked up her survivors.

One of the most conspicuous accomplishments of the Coast Guard in World War I was its management of the handling and loading of explosives bound for the war zones. Virtually all such cargoes moved through the ports of New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk, and the efficiency with which the Coast Guard did its part is attested by the fact that not a single disastrous explosion occurred afloat in connection with any of that work and not a life was lost. Some idea of the magnitude as well as the danger of the job may be

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gleaned from the fact that from December 13, 1917, to June 30, 1919, officers and men of the Coast Guard supervised the handling of various types of high explosives aggregating 345,602 tons in the port of New York alone. This huge quantity of sudden death was loaded into 1,698 vessels without the loss of a single life.

On shore, however, a serious blast occurred on the evening of October 4, 1918, in the loading plant of the T. A. Gillespie Company at Morgan, New Jersey, in which the Coast Guard figured. The service had no connection with the plant, but after the explosion a company of Coast Guardsmen stationed at Perth Amboy, New Jersey, was rushed to the scene to render whatever assistance was possible.

Blast followed blast while the men were on the scene, subjecting them to veritable barrages of flying metal and killing several employees. One was beheaded while talking to a Coast Guard warrant officer.

Besides rendering aid in getting injured people out of the plant, the Coast Guard probably prevented the disaster from being much more serious. A detachment commanded by Lieutenant J. E. Stika braved almost certain destruction when they moved a nine-car train loaded with TNT out of the Gillespie yards to a safe position. To do so, they had to straighten and lay sections of track which had been uprooted by the initial explosions.

The Coast Guard's most serious loss in World War I—in fact, the Navy's most serious loss involving combat vessels—



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was the sinking of the cutter *Tampa*. After she had been on duty in European waters for almost a year, Rear Admiral Niblack, commanding the U. S. naval forces based on Gibraltar, sent a letter of commendation to Captain Charles Satterlee, the *Tampa's* skipper, calling attention to the fact that the cutter had escorted eighteen convoys between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar, had never been disabled and had made only two requests for repairs, both minor, in that time.

"This excellent record is an evidence of a high state of efficiency and excellent ship's spirit and an organization capable of keeping the vessel in service with a minimum of shore assistance. The squadron commander takes great pleasure in congratulating the commanding officer, officers and crew on the record which they have made."

Three weeks later all hands of the *Tampa* had gone to their deaths and Admiral Niblack's glowing commendation served to illustrate the enormity of the loss.

The *Tampa* was on her way back to Milford Haven after escorting a convoy to Gibraltar. On the evening of September 26, 1918, a loud explosion was heard by persons on other ships in the convoy but the cause of it was undetermined at the time. When the *Tampa* failed to arrive at her destination, search was made for her by U. S. destroyers and British patrol craft. Beyond small bits of wreckage identified as belonging to the *Tampa* and two unidentified bodies in naval uniforms, no trace of the cutter was found.

It is believed the *Tampa* was sunk by a German subma-

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rine. In fact, the U-53 reportedly claimed to have sunk a United States ship of the cutter's description. A total of 115 persons perished with the *Tampa*, 111 of them Coast Guardsmen.

In a letter of regret at her loss, the British Admiralty told Admiral Sims that the various convoy commanders recognized the service rendered by the cutter as an ocean escort and noted the fact that of 350 ships she guarded from Gibraltar, only two were lost by enemy action.

"Appreciation of the good work done by the U.S.S. *Tampa* may be some consolation to those bereft and Their Lordships would be glad if this could be conveyed to those concerned," the letter said.

One other anecdote from the Coast Guard's exploits in World War I is noteworthy. It might be called a tale of mass disaster to ships, although only one man lost his life.

The U.S.S. *Marietta*, with Captain H. G. Hamlet, USCG, in command sailed from Brest for Hampton Roads early on the morning of April 27, 1919, together with the U.S.S. *Teresa*, the U.S.S. *MacDonough* and nine small vessels, all but one of which were former fishing boats which had been used as mine sweepers. Captain Hamlet commanded the entire convoy. When they left Brest, the weather was favorable but, as frequently happens in the Bay of Biscay area, the sea was kicking up considerably by noon, and an hour later the U.S.S. *Rambler*, a converted yacht was flying the "man overboard" signal. The entire convoy reduced speed, and as the

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*Rambler* had dropped life buoys and life rafts which acted as markers, all ships began to search for the man.

By this time a strong wind was blowing with accompanying rain squalls. When the search had been in progress less than an hour, the *Courtney*, one of the mine sweepers, reported that she was leaking badly, so she was ordered to return to Brest with the *McNeil*, another mine sweeper, as escort. The weather continued to get worse and Captain Hamlet ordered all the fishing boats back to Brest and the *MacDonough* and *Rambler* were detailed to escort them. That left the *Teresa* and the *Marietta* to carry on the search for the *Rambler's* missing crew member.

It was not long, however, until word was received that the *McNeil* was in trouble, and one of the fishing boats, then on the way into Brest, was ordered to assist her. Next came word that the *Courtney* was sinking, so the *Marietta* and *Teresa* were forced to abandon their hunt for the missing sailor and go to the *Courtney's* aid.

Hamlet directed the *Teresa* to get to windward of the *Courtney*, make an oil slick, drift down on her and take off the crew, then take the derelict in tow for Brest. All this was done, but the *Courtney* was rapidly filling and when the *Douglas* asked for a tow, the *Teresa* dropped the *Courtney* and took a line from the *Douglas*. The *Marietta* stood by until the *Courtney* sank about 7:00 P.M., and then set out to catch up with the *Teresa*. She arrived in time to see the

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*Douglas* being abandoned and her crew being taken off by the *Teresa*.

Once more the *Marietta* stood by the derelict until a heavy rain squall obscured it about 10:30 P.M., and it was never sighted again.

The *Marietta* cruised the vicinity without success until about midnight, then set out in the direction of the *James* to whose assistance the *Teresa* had previously been directed. The wind had reached almost hurricane force by this time, creating a heavy sea. On arriving in the vicinity of the *James*, Hamlet found that the *MacDonough*, together with a tug and two destroyers sent out from Brest, were standing by. Soon after daylight, the tug got a line aboard the *James* and started towing her toward Brest, but the line quickly parted.

It was obvious that the *James* could not live long in such a sea. Her fires had been extinguished the evening before by water rising in the boiler room. Her men were exhausted from bailing and were suffering from exposure.

Captain Hamlet resolved to take the crew off the *James*, but it posed a difficult problem for him. The *Marietta* was only a small gunboat to begin with, and her two low-powered engines were none too reliable on account of the condition of the ship's boilers. Nevertheless, they got a line to the *James* by means of which they hauled one of her life rafts back and forth between the two ships. With that device and by making liberal use of oil to smooth the sea as much as

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possible, all forty-seven of the *James's* complement were rescued without even an injury, although it required three hours' work and taxed Captain Hamlet's seamanship to the limit to keep his ship in that precarious position in such weather.

Even on the American side of the Atlantic, the Coast Guard had its share of excitement and danger, including action under enemy fire. For example, a U-boat began shelling the tug *Perth Amboy* and her tow of four barges within sight of the Coast Guard station at East Orleans, Massachusetts, one summer morning in 1918. In spite of the fact that it was unarmed, the keeper and crew of the station launched a boat and went to the aid of the tug. The shelling still was in progress as they drew near the tug but it ceased abruptly and the U-boat disappeared. Meanwhile the crews of the tug and barges had taken to their boats and were met by the Coast Guardsmen who administered first aid to a man seriously injured.

Less than a month later, at Chicamacomico, North Carolina, a lookout at Coast Guard Station No. 179 was startled by a great column of smoke billowing up from the stern of a steamer about seven miles offshore. Fire and heavy explosions followed. Without knowing for sure what had happened, Keeper John A. Midgett got the station's powerboat under way for the scene of the disaster but about five miles offshore they met one of the ship's boats with the captain and six men in it. The captain informed them the ship, a

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British tanker, had been torpedoed. Two other boats had been launched but one of them capsized in the midst of flaming oil which covered the sea around the ship and it was feared that all in that boat had perished.

After warning the Britisher not to attempt a landing through the surf until they returned, Midgett headed the powerboat toward the wreck. Reaching the scene, they found two great masses of flame about a hundred yards apart.

"In between the two great flames," a Coast Guard report of the incident related, "when the smoke would clear away a little, a life boat could be seen, bottom up, with six men clinging to it. Heavy seas washed over the boat."

Cautiously, Midgett steered his boat through the smoke and blazing oil to the overturned craft.

"Lifting the six men on board as quickly as possible," the account continued, "the Coast Guard boat sought the safety of clear water. The six survivors, all that were left of the sixteen men who tried to launch the first boat to leave the ship, told their rescuers something of their harrowing experience in the water. It appears that all hands found places to cling to their boat and that they were able to maintain their positions until the vessel blew up.

"After that moment, with the deluge of blazing oil and flame-crested waves bearing down upon them, to escape an agonizing death they were compelled to submerge as the blazing walls of water and flame swept over them. Their

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efforts to protect themselves from the two elements—fire and water—quickly told upon their strength, and when they could no longer keep up the struggle, there was no alternative but to let go and drift away to the merciful unconsciousness of death by drowning.”

Subsequently, the tanker's third boat, containing twenty men, was located and taken in tow and, in due course, Midgett and his men landed thirty-six survivors in all.

The years immediately following the First World War were not particularly peaceful for the Coast Guard, for Prohibition had come to the United States in the interim, thrusting upon the successors of the old Revenue Cutter Service one of their biggest peacetime jobs. It was one that acquainted the general public with the Coast Guard as nothing had done before, although the picture thus painted of its activities was unfortunately limited.

Mention of the Coast Guard in the twenties immediately conjured up visions of running gun battles with the “Rummies” and, unquestionably, the Coast Guard had plenty of them in the course of carrying out its mandate to enforce the law. Even as in wartime, however, the service did not relax a bit in the execution of its manifold other duties despite the terrific burden imposed upon it by the necessity of preventing liquor smuggling.

It still continued to render assistance to vessels in distress, to maintain the International Ice Patrol, the Bering Sea Patrol and even found time to go inland several times to

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lend a hand to communities devastated by floods in the Mississippi, Ohio and Illinois valleys. It went on destroying derelicts that might become menaces to navigation, carrying medical aid to deep-sea fishermen, determining the qualifications of the crews of passenger liners as lifeboatmen and regulating the movement and anchorage of vessels on the nation's navigable waters.

Naturally, it was the war against the rumrunners that kept the Coast Guard most in the headlines.

By a strange reversal of precedent, too, it was this same war that brought the service a substantial increase in size. Whenever the United States gets into an international war, as we have seen, the Coast Guard automatically becomes a part of the Navy. During Prohibition, however, part of the Navy joined the Coast Guard. Congress transferred twenty destroyers from the Navy to the Coast Guard in 1924, besides appropriating approximately \$13,000,000 for the acquisition of a large number of fast motorboats and patrol craft—all in response to President Coolidge's recommendation for a major expansion of the Revenue fleet.

Although its operations against the rumrunners brought bitter criticism on its head from the "Wets" who berated the service for excessive zeal, for violation of international law and an imposing array of other high crimes and misdemeanors, the Commandant was able to report in the following year that the so-called "Rum-Row" lying off the New York and New Jersey coasts had been "effectively scattered."



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High adventure was frequently the lot of the men fighting the "Rummies" and sometimes it was death. The smugglers, many of them possessed of almost unlimited cash, often were equipped with high-powered speedboats which could outrun the Coast Guard craft, especially close inshore where the destroyers dared not operate.

A big Scandinavian chief petty officer recounted how one of those speedboats made life miserable for him off the Jersey coast. Even when he did manage to catch its owner with the goods, the owner had the money or the influence, perhaps both, to get out of the clutches of the law, and in no time he and his boat would be back on the job.

"One night ve coom across im hove to," the CPO said. "He was broke down and hailed us for a tow. Ve couldn't refuse although it galled me plenty.

"I told him to get aboard the cutter and I put a line aboard his boat. Instead of making it fast on his foredeck, though, I passed it in through his wheelhouse window and made it fast low down in the cabin. And you know what? The strain on dat line seemed to pull the bow of his boat right under. She swamped and I yoost had to cut the towline and let her sink."

Now it almost goes without saying that the sterling and stirring record built up by the cutter service throughout the long years of its existence was not something that came about by chance. Steadfast devotion to splendid ideals undoubtedly played a major part in the establishment of that record, but

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there was another factor. In the performance of any military organization, much depends upon command. The type of leadership military men get is all important. Good soldiers often fail miserably when their officers are poor, whereas good officers just as often have wrought what seemed to have been miracles with only indifferent troops.

In the case of the Coast Guard, therefore, a great deal of responsibility for the showing of the rank and file of the service rests with the officers. What manner of men are those officers, whose men have done so well, and where do they come from?

When Congress acceded to Alexander Hamilton's request in 1790 for ten sailing cutters to secure the young Republic's revenues, the officers for those ships—they only needed one or two for each—were chiefly men who had had experience in the Continental Navy. The oldest known commission issued to an officer afloat by the United States was one signed by George Washington in which the first President said "that reposing special trust and confidence in the integrity, diligence and good conduct of Hopley Yeaton of New Hampshire. . . . I do appoint him Master of a cutter in the Service of the United States, for the protection of the revenue."

In later years officers for the cutters were obtained from both the Navy and the Merchant Marine but it became evident that this method was not entirely satisfactory. As more and more diverse duties were imposed upon the cutters, the

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work of their officers began to take on a specialized character for which the average Navy or Merchant Marine officer had neither the training nor experience. Many times there was trouble, too, because the Navy men did not relish the idea of being made subordinate to civilian officials, for the cutters were under the jurisdiction of the Collector of the Customs in whose district they were based. Undoubtedly discrepancies in pay and the fact that their erstwhile colleagues had a great deal more leisure in peacetime had much to do with the dissatisfaction of the Navy men.

There were numerous attempts to solve the problem. Treasury Secretary Louis McLane tried by eliminating transfers from the Navy. Congress tried by demanding that officers appointed to the Revenue Cutter Service first prove their capabilities.

The first real progress toward a solution was made, however, when Congress voted to establish a Revenue Cadet system in 1876. A special school for their training was opened at New Bedford, Massachusetts. In 1900 the school was moved to Baltimore, Maryland, and ten years later, to the present site of the Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut.

Because of the emphasis on competency in seamanship which the Coast Guard has always maintained, the training of its officers was conducted for many years in sailing ships. Gradually, however, the increased use of steam for motive power in ships brought the study of engineering to the fore,

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especially after the service began replacing its sailing cutters with steam-powered craft because they were better able to go to the aid of distressed sailing ships.

The curriculum for the cadets was further broadened as the duties of the service expanded. Scientific training is necessary, for example, in connection with the work of the Weather Patrol and the International Ice Patrol. The knowledge of maritime law required of a present-day Coast Guard officer makes him truly eligible for designation as a "sea lawyer," but use of that appellation probably still will get you a black eye from the old-timers.

Admission to the Coast Guard Academy is on a more thoroughly democratic basis than that to either West Point or Annapolis. In the case of those two schools, candidates must have a Congressional or other official appointment before they can take the entrance examinations, although many Congressmen bestow their appointments on the basis of competitive examinations. Admission to the Coast Guard Academy, however, is based on a nationwide competitive examination held in May of each year and which is open to all young men who meet the required scholastic and physical requirements.

First-year cadets at the Academy are known as "swabs," and they report in July of their freshman year for a preliminary six-weeks course in algebra and trigonometry prior to the start of the academic term in September. That preliminary term is known as "swab" summer. Throughout "swab"

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year, the cadet moves at the double whenever he moves, is thoroughly regimented by the upperclassmen and often wonders how he ever got himself into such a lash-up. Gradually, however, the spirit and traditions of the service get in their work and when his four-year course is completed, he has as fine a scientific and engineering background as he could obtain anywhere, plus a knowledge of maritime law that would make the old-time "sea lawyer" popeyed.

But it takes more than education to make a Coast Guardsman. Down off the coast of North Carolina, for example, where a sliver of sand known as Cape Hatteras Bank shelters the mainland from the full fury of the storms that sweep the Wimble and Diamond Shoals, they don't exactly have a word for it, as the saying goes, but they have a family whose history closely parallels that of the Coast Guard. The story of this family—the Midgetts—has in it the essence of what makes a Coast Guardsman, for it is typical of the devotion to duty which is so characteristic of the men of the service.

It was one of those Midgetts who commanded the lifeboat from the Chicamacomico Station which rescued members of the crew of the torpedoed British tanker *Mirlo* in 1918.

Nobody, not even the Midgetts, knows the exact origin of the family or when it got into the lifesaving business off the Carolinas, but the popular theory is that early in the history of this country, three Midgett brothers were shipwrecked off Hatteras Bank, made their way to the sandspit and settled down. Long before the Coast Guard took over

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the lighthouse and lifesaving services, Midgetts were connected with both; as far back as written records down in that country go, the family has been in the forefront of efforts to protect the seagoing community from disaster on the beach.

When the Coast Guard finally did take over the lifesaving stations, the Midgett family joined up wholesale. Fathers enlisted and, for generations since, their sons have followed in their footsteps. Today it's almost heresy for a youth of the Midgett family even to suggest doing anything but enlist in the Coast Guard.

Although Keeper John Allen Midgett is the one most frequently mentioned in connection with the *Mirlo* rescue, the fact is that his boat was manned by five members of his family—Arthur V., Clarence E., Zion S. and Leroy S. Midgett and Lee O'Neil. The latter's mother was a Midgett.

Keeper John, known familiarly throughout the region as Cap'n John, began his lifesaving career at the age of fourteen when he participated in the rescue of members of the crew of the Steamship *Strathairly*, which ran aground in a gale near the Chicamacomico Station. In the forty years which followed his enlistment, he took part in approximately thirty major rescues and many minor ones. After cheating death innumerable times, ironically he lost his life in an automobile accident in North Carolina in 1938.

History repeated itself in a curious fashion for some of John Midgett's descendants in the early days of World War II. As in the case of the *Mirlo*, a U-boat sent a torpedo into

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the belly of another tanker within sight of the Chicamamico Lifesaving Station in January, 1942. Palmer Midgett, son of Zion, was Officer-in-Charge at the time and his brother, Dewey, was on duty with him. Like the Midgetts of 1918, they were in the crew of the lifeboat which rowed eight miles to the aid of the blazing tanker.

There, however, the parallel ends, for the tanker was not mortally hurt. Her crew had the fire pretty well under control and were able to stay with the ship. Two men had been injured and one killed, so the Coast Guardsmen removed the injured seamen and sent them ahead to hospital, while the others remained to fight the fire and finally brought the ship to port.

Other members of the family are making Coast Guard history on many of the world's far-flung battlefronts. One of the first Coast Guard landing barges to scrape its keel on the sands of Guadalcanal on the day of the initial Marine invasion had William Vance Midgett, twenty-five, a machinist's mate, as one of its crew. He was one of a detachment of twenty-five Coast Guardsmen manning small landing craft based aboard a Navy transport. Another member of the group was Elmer Midgett, chief boatswain's mate, who was coxswain of a landing barge.

Go aboard almost any floating unit of the Coast Guard these stirring days and you're liable to run into a Midgett. They are commissioned officers, petty officers and seamen—

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but first and foremost, they are Coast Guardsmen and proud of it!

Their spirit is best typified by the words of old Cap'n John Midgett as he drove his boat through the hell of blazing oil to the *Mirlo's* survivors, clinging to their overturned boat:

"You'll have time to say your prayers afterwards, lads! Now let's get on with it!"

Since 1939 the old United States Lighthouse Service—it was established a year before Alexander Hamilton got his Revenue Cutter Service approved by Congress—has been an important division of the Coast Guard. Employing the powers under the Reorganization Act, President Roosevelt united the two services by an Executive Order. Inasmuch as the Coast Guard then had the Lifesaving Service under its jurisdiction, it seemed a logical move to give it the other major agency concerned with safety of life at sea.

The long history of the nation's lighthouses and their keepers is replete with exciting stories, despite the fact that there's a great deal of dullness about it, for this Service has a tradition of heroic devotion to duty that is fully as lustrous as any.

An extraordinary illustration of how one lightkeeper lived up to that tradition was given the year before the transfer of the service to the Coast Guard.

During a terrific storm off the New England coast, all the buildings except the light tower at the Palmer Island station



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in New Bedford, Massachusetts, harbor, were swept away. Shortly beforehand, however, Keeper Arthur A. Small got his wife into the tower for safety. Throughout most of the day he went about his duties. The island was getting the full force of the gale, with seas breaching clear across it, and one of them swept him overboard.

By swimming under water, Small managed to get back to the tower, but in the meantime his wife had seen him swept away and the intrepid woman made a supreme effort to launch the station's boat to go to her husband's aid. She could not know, of course, that he was swimming under water. The gallant attempt cost her her life, for she was swept into the sea and drowned.

Small recovered his wife's body and then, despite that tragic experience and his own suffering from exposure and exhaustion, he remained at his post in the lighthouse throughout the night, keeping the light and the fog signal in proper operation until relief was furnished him in the morning. His own report of the tragedy, dictated from his hospital bed in the third person, is a model of self-effacement.

"Mrs. Small, the keeper's wife, was seen by the keeper while he was overboard," the report said. "She left the oil house where he had told her to stay in the upper part and evidently she tried to launch a boat to save the keeper. But she was swept away and drowned.

"The station is in need of 35-mm. lamp equipment and

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kerosene. All records are gone and stationery and log books needed. There is no shelter to be had at the station except in the top of the tower.

"Keeper remained on duty until properly relieved. The light and fog signal were in good order. Keeper removed to St. Luke's Hospital suffering from exhaustion and exposure."

The men of the lightships have the tedium of their lives relieved occasionally, too. The Diamond Shoal lightship, off Cape Hatteras, for instance, seems to have almost more than its share. Back in 1918 the men on that station were watching an unidentified merchantman proceeding along the coast about a mile and a half distant when a U-boat surfaced suddenly and began pumping shells into the vessel. The sub fired about forty rounds—not a very good sample of marksmanship, incidentally—and soon had the ship afire.

While this was going on, the lightship's first mate, Walter L. Barnett, ignoring the obvious consequences of such action, sent out a wireless message warning other ships in the heavily traveled area of the presence of the U-boat. Naturally, once the sub had disposed of its original target, it turned its gun on the lightship, firing six rounds from a range of about two miles. The first mate ordered all hands into the starboard boat and the lightship was abandoned. She had not been badly damaged at that time, however.

The U-boat turned its attention briefly to another passing merchant ship, firing fourteen rounds at it without visible

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effect. It then abandoned that chase and returned to the lightship and fired seven more shots into it. From a distance of about five or six miles, the crew watched her sink a short time later.

In the fall of 1933 another lightship on the same station was caught in the center of a tropical hurricane and despite its 6,000-pound anchor and twelve tons of anchor chain, it drifted onto the very shoals from which it was intended to guide other ships.

By skillful seamanship, however, the crew managed to get the ship out of the breakers and away to sea. During the storm the captain was injured when a particularly heavy sea battered in one of the ports in the pilot house. The mate had several ribs broken while trying to lash down a ventilator which had carried away.

Then, with water inches deep in the fireroom, a safety plug in one of the boilers blew, making it impossible to keep steam up. The fires had to be extinguished hastily during the worst of the storm and, with a 120-mile gale blowing them back onto the shoals, men crawled into the boiler, which had cooled only slightly, and replaced the plug. They weathered the storm, and after a relief ship had arrived, made their way to port with lifeboats gone and the upper deck of the ship a mass of wreckage.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COMBAT CUTTERS

IN THOSE gloomy, early days of the war when the Navy fought with its back to the wall in the Pacific and strove with pitifully few ships in the Atlantic to keep open the absolutely vital supply lines to Britain, the Coast Guard's little fleet of patrol cutters was the backbone of the escort force. At times, in fact, the *Hamilton* class of so-called combat cutters and a lone Navy destroyer were the only United States escort craft making the transatlantic run to Britain.

It was soul-searing work in those days to run a convoy to the United Kingdom and no one who has not lived for days on end in salt-water-sodden clothing with the thermometer below freezing, on tiny ships that bounce like demented jitterbugs, can have any appreciation of the ordeal of the men of the escort vessels. Death rode the gunwales of their ships on every crossing and there was little glory and small reward for them when a trip was over. Unlike the men of the merchant navy, who draw comparatively fat bonuses for each trip they make into a combat zone as well as overtime pay and similar benefits, the men of the Coast Guard draw Navy pay with a meager ten-percent increase over their basic scale for sea duty.

## COMBAT CUTTERS

You seldom hear an enlisted seaman complain about that discrepancy, however. They seem to feel that the fact that they have a chance to fight back compensates for whatever advantage the merchant sailor may enjoy in the matter of pay. One thing that does gripe both Coast Guard and Navy men, however, is to read of strikes on the home front for such things as portal-to-portal pay. The seamen not only are risking their lives when they go to sea, but they are putting in hours which would drive the National Labor Relations Board or the Wage Hour Administration into tizzies if they had any say in the matter.

Take an average day in the life of an average gob:

With all hands, he turns out before dawn every day the ship is at sea and goes to his battle station where he stays until after the sun is up, because that is one of the danger hours in submarine zones. When the order is given to "secure" from General Quarters, it usually is followed by a call for "a cleee-an sweep-down, all weather decks and ladders," and the sailor boy starts his broom or mop. That little chore must be done before he "chows down." After breakfast, he usually has loading drill or some other form of military instruction, a couple of more sweep-downs, a little paint-chipping or similar uninteresting toil. He must stand at least one watch in four at his post if he's a lookout, helmsman or member of a gun crew, for instance. If he's lucky and doesn't have to attend aircraft recognition lectures or fire-fighting drills, he may get to do a little "sack duty," as turn-

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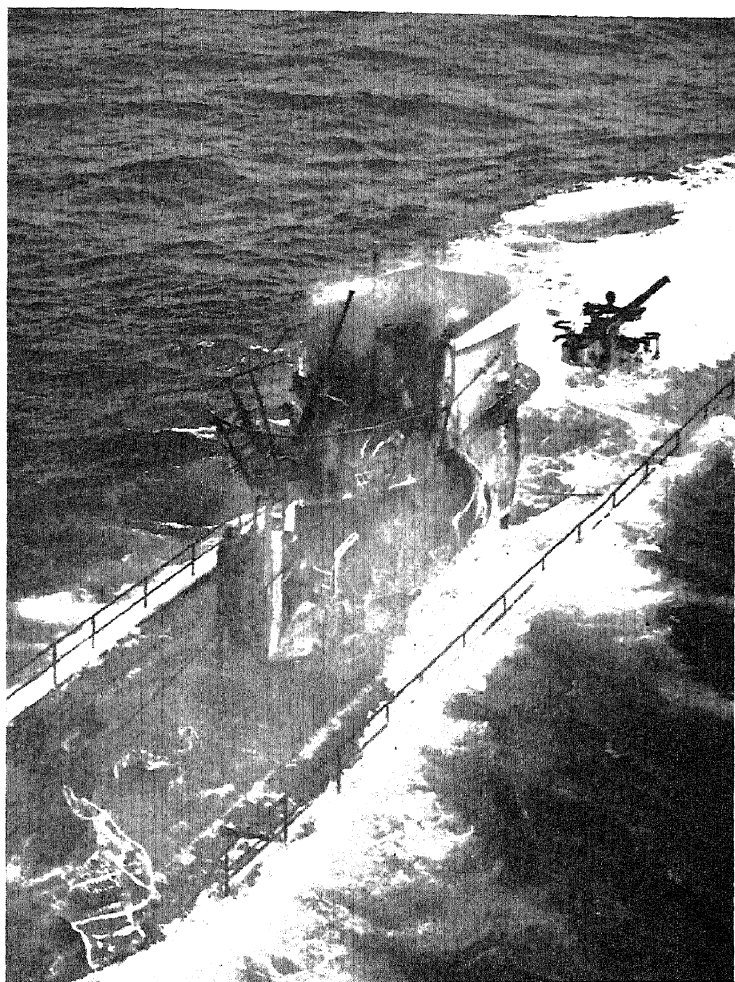
ing into one's bunk is called. After evening chow, there usually is at least one sweep-down before sunset "G.Q." is sounded, when he goes again to his battle station to remain until the likelihood of a twilight sub attack has passed.

Frequently sailors don't average four hours of sleep a night and, if the weather is rough—as it is most of the time along the northern convoy routes—they don't sleep at all. They just "dope off" occasionally, with one hand clutching the side of the bunk.

It takes long-legged ships for convoy duty and that's where the 327-footers of the *Hamilton* class shone. They had plenty of range not only for the ocean crossing, but for all the running around they had to do in the course of a trip—dashes to rescue the crew of torpedoed ships or to attack a sub lying in wait for the convoy some distance ahead.

"We never had to worry about refueling," said Commander James A. "Jimmy" Hirshfield of the *Campbell*. "But that's about the only thing we didn't have to worry about."

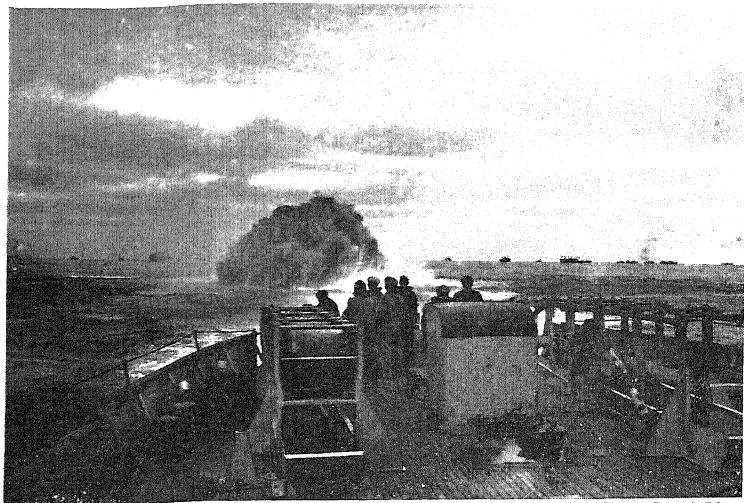
Hirshfield is a veteran of some of the toughest U-boat fighting of the war. He had the *Campbell* when Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz sprang his *Rudelsystem* (the wolf pack) on the hard-pressed Allies. The *Campbell* made countless depth-charge attacks on the U-boats during the year Hirshfield was her skipper, but he was on the homeward leg of his third round trip to Britain before he ever saw a German submarine on the surface.



U. S. Coast Guard Photo

#### COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB

Effect of the U. S. Coast Guard cutter *Spencer's* fire are visible in this close-up shot of the U-boat, taken as the battle raged. The Nazi standing by the stanchion amidships disappeared a moment after this picture was taken by a Coast Guard photographer. The U-boat had been trying to sneak into the center of the convoy.



U. S. Coast Guard Photo

#### COAST GUARDSMEN WATCH EXPLOSION OF DEPTH CHARGE

Coast Guardsmen on the deck of the U. S. Coast Guard cutter *Spencer* watch the explosion of a depth charge which blasted a Nazi U-boat.



U. S. Coast Guard Photo

#### K-GUN GOES INTO ACTION ON THE "SPENCER"

Sailors aboard the cutter *Spencer* watch a K-gun go into action.



## COMBAT CUTTERS

It happened on Washington's Birthday, Jimmy recalled, and it was the high point of the *Campbell's* career up to that point.

They were in convoy and headed west. The weather was foul with the wind at hurricane force part of the time.

"The anemometer was up over 89—and that's the highest it registers," Hirshfield said with a grin.

"We were all dead tired," Hirshfield went on, "for, in addition to the bad weather, we had been sent off the day before to pick up survivors from a torpedoed freighter."

Rescue work of that nature is one of the most difficult and dangerous tasks the cutters have to perform because the Nazis have no regard for humanitarianism. A cutter hove to while dragging exhausted seamen from icy waters of the North Atlantic is just a sitting target to them, that much easier to hit.

Hirshfield had convincing proof of this soon after he reached the spot where the freighter had been hit. All hands were engrossed in the rescue work when a terrific explosion astern of them sent a geyser of water into the air.

"Get the hell away from that rack!" roared Hirshfield, jarred rudely out of his customary calm. He thought one of his men accidentally had tripped the depth-charge rack at one side of the fantail and that one of the "ash cans" had let go when it reached the explosive depth for which it was set.

A quick check on the battle-phone circuit proved, how-

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ever, that his first surmise was wrong because all the depth charges were in their proper places!

There was only one other explanation possible. The U-boat which had torpedoed the freighter had hung around in the hope of getting a crack at a rescue ship. She had fired a torpedo at the *Campbell* from extreme range and missed, but when the "tin fish" had run its limit, it detonated automatically.

"We didn't stop any more after that on rescue jobs," Hirshfield related.

Between the time of that attack and their return to the convoy, the men of the *Campbell* had a hectic time. Twelve times they had scrambled topsides to their battle stations in a twenty-four-hour period at the insistent, raucous clangor of the General Quarters alarm. Pattern after pattern of depth charges had thundered under water with a violence that knocked paint off the cutter's bulkheads as they carried out five separate attacks on lurking U-boats. Twice the wily marauders had been spotted on the surface, but they managed to submerge before the *Campbell* got within gun range and, although she peppered each area with depth charges, she couldn't stick around looking for wreckage to determine if any of her attacks were successful. It was apparent that twenty or thirty subs were in the area looking for her convoy.

Darkness was closing in again as she neared her plodding charges and everyone felt sure they were in for a real work-

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ing-over from the wolf pack. They didn't have long to wait.

A sub on the surface about thirty degrees off the starboard bow! Scarcely had that information reached the bridge, however, when another sound contact was reported. A second sub at about the same bearing to port!

Hirshfield set a course for the second target located on the sound gear.

"We lost it quickly, though," he said, "and were about to turn toward the other contact when we spotted this baby on the surface."

In the darkness it was difficult to make out many details despite the fact that the dully glistening U-boat was only a few yards' distant. She was trying desperately to get away.

"Right rudder!" roared Hirshfield. "Ram her!"

It takes courage of the chilled-steel variety to ram a ship at sea at any time, particularly when you know she's laden with TNT, such as a submarine carries in her torpedoes. But Hirshfield was acting under specific orders and, as he explains, he didn't have much time to dwell on possible consequences. In telling the story, however, he laughingly recalls the British destroyer skipper who angered the Admiralty by ramming a submarine *four times*.

"They thought that twice should have been ample," grinned Hirshfield.

As the *Campbell* heeled on her new course, the silvery beam of her searchlight probing for the sub, her forward guns opened fire. Figures of some of the U-boat's crew were

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glimpsed momentarily on her gleaming wet deck. They seemed transfixed as they realized their plight.

Soon the *Campbell* was so close that her bow guns would not bear and they ceased firing. There was a thud, then a rending sound of tearing metal as the cutter struck the U-boat a glancing blow.

"That was the first time I saw a submarine on the surface although I was homeward bound on my third round trip of the war across the Atlantic," Hirshfield said.

As the stricken U-boat slid past in the darkness, the *Campbell's* crew were yelling like Comanches. One of them raked the sub's deck and conning tower with a Lewis gun as she went by, endeavoring to make sure that none of the Germans would be able to man their guns.

The machine-gunner accomplished his objective, for not a shot was fired from the sub, but he also made Commander Hirshfield the *Campbell's* only casualty. Slugs from the Lewis gun tore through part of the superstructure just below the bridge and literally sprayed the skipper with fragments which inflicted relatively minor cuts on the side of his face and head.

In less time than it takes to tell—the entire action lasted only about two minutes—the rear guns of the cutter bore on the receding submarine and opened fire. They pumped several rounds into the already crippled U-boat at point-blank range and the cutter's officers could see the sub shudder under the impact. After the frustration of the preceding

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twelve hours, when they fought five submarines without the satisfaction of knowing whether they had got a single one, the sight of their tracer fire flaming into the sixth Nazi's vitals produced a savage elation in the *Campbell's* crew and as the raider began to go down by the tail, their victorious shouts were her only requiem.

The joy of conquest was tempered somewhat by the discovery that the *Campbell* herself had been cruelly hurt in the encounter. The collision with the sub, glancing though it was, had torn a twelve-foot gash in the cutter's hull which quickly flooded the engine room and left the ship helpless in one of the most dangerous ocean areas in the world.

She was not left long alone, though, for a Polish destroyer, the *Burza*, which had been racing up to join the escort group, hove in sight and stood by throughout the night.

Despite his wounds, Texas Jimmy Hirshfield remained in active command of his stricken ship, supervising efforts to effect emergency repairs. As a sample of the sort of thing the men who are fighting the Battle of the Atlantic are called upon to do, four of the *Campbell's* crew stripped off their clothes, tied lines about their bodies and went over the side to examine the underwater damage. The water was icy but it didn't deter those lads. While trying to rig a collision mat over the hole, they attached light lines to corks and then, with the corks in their mouths, dived down to the hole. The idea was to shove the corks through the hole and let them

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come up inside the ship where others would haul the lines in and thus get the collision mat into place.

When one of the divers was being praised for the part he played, he grinned and said:

"Aw, hell. It was the only way I knew to get a slug of brandy without waiting till we got to port."

The effort to rig the collision mat in place was unsuccessful, so Hirshfield then tried to lighten the ship in the hope that the hole would rise above the water line and permit the engine room to be pumped out. He ordered all possible top hamper jettisoned. Searchlights and all sorts of other equipment went over the side.

Daylight found Hirshfield still on the bridge, his head and clothing blood-soaked. The *Burza* still was standing by, screening the crippled cutter from possible additional attacks. Incidentally, the destroyer wasn't in any too good shape herself. Already she was crowded with refugees, survivors of other torpedoings, and due to fuel shortage, only one of her boilers was in operation.

This didn't seem to faze the hardy Poles, though, for as the grateful men of the *Campbell* put it, the *Burza* was "the fightingest ship we ever saw."

After Hirshfield had had a chance to survey his situation in daylight, he decided to transfer as many of his crew as possible to the *Burza*. There was no point in all hands being jeopardized further, so he sent four officers and 100 non-rated men of the crew over the side. One of the most re-

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luctant to leave was Anton Otto Fischer, the illustrator. Now a lieutenant commander in the Coast Guard Reserve, Fischer had been assigned to the *Campbell* to get material for paintings depicting the Coast Guard in action. He got it that trip, all right.

Meanwhile Hirshfield had been persuaded to go below and let the ship's doctor dress his wounds. They weren't serious, fortunately, but the doctor wanted to give him a booster shot of antitetanus serum, just in case.

"Let's skip the shot, doc," said Hirshfield. "I don't want any more bother than I've got just at this point. And if we don't get back, it won't matter whether I get tetanus or not."

The doctor appeared to acquiesce, but while a pharmacist's mate was swabbing the skipper's face, the doctor moved around to the other side and jabbed the needle in without warning.

"I could have shot that doctor cheerfully a little later," Hirshfield said, "because, although I never had had any reaction from my previous inoculations, that one made me sick as a dog. I couldn't keep even a glass of water down for hours."

On the day after the ramming of the sub, the *Burza* was relieved by a British corvette and the Polish ship shoved off for the nearest port. At one point during the day, it had been discovered that one of her holds was flooded. In her overcrowded, fuel-shy condition this was serious, but it didn't seem to bother Lieutenant Commander Franciszek Pitulko,

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her skipper. He merely ordered the hold pumped out and the ship continued her patrol. After all, the *Burza* had come through much worse situations. At Dunkirk, for example, she had had her bow blown off but had managed to get back to England.

The *Burza*, incidentally, furnished the men of the *Campbell* with a striking example of how much the Nazis know about the affairs of their enemies. The *Burza* originally belonged to the French navy and had the high forecastle and other distinguishing characteristics of French destroyers. Nevertheless, when prisoners from the sub rammed by the *Campbell*—they picked up fourteen survivors, all told—spotted the *Burza*, they pointed at her and said:

“Ah, Polish ship, Polish ship!”

One of the most welcome sights he had ever beheld, Hirshfield said, was that of a sturdy little Navy seagoing tug which came churning up over the horizon on the third day after the ramming. Life aboard the *Campbell* by that time had become what Navy men call “pretty rugged” and, despite the protection of the destroyer hovering near by, the strain of waiting for another submarine attack and knowing they no longer would be able to meet it on equal terms or better was beginning to tell on all hands. When the tug showed up, all that was changed. The towing hawser soon was snubbed into place and the long, slow journey back to port began.

Ten uneventful days later they arrived at a North Atlan-



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tic harbor and there Hirshfield and his men got a fresh, grim reminder of the ordeal through which they had passed in the form of survivors from ships lost from their convoy. The Battle of the Atlantic was far from won at that time.

In the excitement attendant upon the release of the *Campbell's* story for publication, a noteworthy feature of the affair which was given scant attention was that the little tug which finally brought the cutter back to where she could be saved to fight again had made the 800-mile trip through those sub-infested waters entirely without escort. Compared to the average fighting ship of the Navy, such tugs don't have sufficient armament to fight their way out of a wet paper bag and yet they undertake missions like that as all part of a day's work. To the men of the *Campbell*, however, the tug's performance was nothing short of heroic and Hirshfield's dark brown eyes shine with emotion when he relates that he discovered on arrival in the British port that Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll, commander in chief of the Atlantic Fleet, had started not one, but two, tugs to his rescue. The second put out from a North African port when word of the cutter's plight was received, but it quickly became obvious that she would not be needed.

That sort of consideration probably would be contemptuously branded as silly softness by the dictatorships, but our military leaders know that it pays handsome dividends in morale. In the case of naval aviators, for instance, no carrier task-force commander would think of failing to make

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the most diligent search for even a single scout plane which did not return to the ship on schedule. Knowing that, the fliers are much more willing to undertake their hazardous missions. They know they will not be callously abandoned as is so often the fate of their Japanese enemies.

Another member of the cutter's complement who, like the skipper, insisted on staying topside throughout the emergency was Sinbad, the *Campbell's* internationally known canine mascot, or "Stinky," as he was called when he was drinking.

All during the action with the U-boat which finally was sunk, Sinbad remained on the cutter's deck with the men, bracing his chunky body against the ship's roll and seemingly enjoying the excitement.

From Boston's Scollay Square to the pubs of Londonderry, the brown, black and white mongrel is known as a true sailorman. Lurid tales are told of his drinking accomplishments—he visits one saloon after another when the ship is in port, drinking a jigger of whisky and a short beer chaser in each until he can scarcely navigate—and his love life apparently is something out of this world. His shipmates relate with something akin to admiration in their voices how Sinbad turns up at the ship with a different girl friend every day—some of them are even waiting on the dock for him when the ship returns from a cruise—but he manages these affairs so smoothly that none of the "ladies" ever catches him with another.

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Since the day in Iceland when the cutter started for sea without him and he plunged into the icy water in an effort to overtake her by swimming, Sinbad has never missed a sailing. On that occasion, the skipper reluctantly put the ship about when he saw the gallant effort the dog was making to avoid being A.W.O.L., and had him picked up.

The dog, who has a marked distaste for officers and tolerates their company only when he needs someone to bring him back to the ship after a drinking spree, has been through so much with the *Campbell's* crew that the men feel nothing can happen to them so long as he's aboard. Up to this writing, they have been absolutely right.

Although the spotlight of public attention has been focused chiefly on the Coast Guard's bigger combat cutters, it was a little 165-footer which got credit for sinking the first U-boat after Grand Admiral Doenitz launched his submarine blitz along America's east coast.

Late in the spring of 1942, when sinkings of coastal shipping were at their peak, when American ships were going down within sight of Atlantic City's Steel Pier and of the many beaches from Sandy Hook to Hatteras, the cutter *Icarus* was patrolling off the Carolina coast.

The sea was placid and a scorching sun hung in the sky's cloudless vault. No more unlikely submarine weather could be imagined.

The cutter's fifty-three-year-old skipper, a veteran of twenty-eight years' life-saving service with the Coast Guard,

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was Lieutenant Commander Maurice D. Jester of Staten Island, New York. Then just a two-striper, he was below with his "Exec" checking recent reports of U-boat positions when the clamorous call to General Quarters sounded.

In the tedious months which had passed, Jester and his second in command, Lieutenant (j.g.) Gabriel E. Pehaim, twenty-nine, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, often had discussed just what they would do in event of coming in contact with an enemy submarine. So when they rushed to the bridge that day, they functioned smoothly as a team.

Pehaim, who had been a quartermaster before getting his commission and, therefore, had had years of training as a helmsman, at once took the wheel, obviating the need for relaying steering instructions to another individual.

It was well that they used that system, for dead ahead and less than 100 yards distant was a U-boat below the surface. Clapping binoculars to his eyes with one hand and steering with the other, Pehaim directed the cutter toward the spot at which the sound gear indicated the sub to be. As the *Icarus* swept over the location, a pattern of depth charges rolled off the racks on her fantail. As she turned for another run, a terrific explosion occurred in the open sea about 200 yards off the port side. Whether it was the sub, or not, Jester couldn't be sure, so he kept the *Icarus* on her course. Crossing the spot where the underseas marauder had submerged, he dropped another pattern of "ash cans" off the fantail

## COMBAT CUTTERS

racks and followed that with a couple of single charges from the "K" guns.

Then, as the cutter's officers and men watched tensely for some indication of the effect of their attack, the placid surface of the sea was broken by great air bubbles. Sometimes that's deadly proof that a U-boat has just fired a spread of torpedoes. This time, however, it had a different meaning, for suddenly the bow of the crippled submarine shot from the depths and pointed skyward at a forty-five-degree angle. Conning tower and deck hatches popped open and members of the crew scrambled topsides and made a dash for the guns.

The men of the *Icarus* were waiting for just such a move, though, and their weapons immediately poured a withering fire the length of the sub's deck, sweeping the Germans toward the conning tower for its scanty shelter. The Germans knew then that the jig was up, for their craft already had begun to sink. One after another they commenced jumping into the sea. Almost immediately the sub slid back into the ocean's fastness, to raid no more.

In typical Coast Guard fashion, then, the *Icarus* turned to the task of rescuing the struggling Germans, plucking thirty-three of them out of the water including *Kapitän-Leutnant* Helmut Rathke, the U-boat skipper, a young-looking, bearded Nazi. One of the group died of wounds received during the brief but futile attempt of the Germans to strike back at their attackers and his body was brought ashore for

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burial. The living prisoners were landed at Charleston, South Carolina, Navy Yard for transfer to prison camps.

Jester was awarded the Navy Cross for the exploit, the first Coast Guard officer so honored in this war, but almost a year elapsed before the general public was permitted to learn of the action. When the Navy did permit disclosure of the details, however, it added new luster to the Coast Guard's record for it was the first announcement of the capture of prisoners from a German U-boat.

Frequently, prisoners taken from the subs are surly and unco-operative when they first come aboard American ships. Their officers are haughty, even insolent. Sometimes the men refuse food, but it has been found, however, that this usually is because they are afraid they will be poisoned. When they are seated at the regular mess tables with the ship's crew and are served from the same sources, their attitude usually undergoes a magic change. The quality, rather than the quantity, of the Americans' "chow" amazes them and, more often than not, loosens their tongues.

Commander Hirshfield of the *Campbell* enjoys telling the story of what happened to one completely Nazified U-boat skipper captured by the Canadian corvette, H.M.C.S. *Assineboine*. After a terrific running fight with a wolf pack for several danger-filled days and nights, the *Assineboine* finally was victorious. She did not come through unscathed, however, for shells from U-boat guns had raked her superstruc-

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ture. One of them had entered the cabin of the young skipper, whose name was Stubbs, and set it afire.

When the prisoners from a sunken sub were being brought aboard, the bulkheads in the captain's cabin still were hot. The quarters were a shambles.

The senior surviving officer from the submarine clambered up the sea ladder and the minute he hit the corvette's deck, he began strutting his Nazi stuff, clicking his heels and barking "Heil Hitler."

Then he demanded that he be given quarters commensurate with his rank. In due course, this demand was conveyed to Stubbs who had been watching his prisoner's performance from the bridge.

Still irate over the damage done to his quarters and equipment and fully cognizant of the mess in his cabin, Stubbs rubbed his bearded chin for a moment.

"Quarters commensurate with his rank, eh?" he murmured. "All right, he can have 'em. Put him in my quarters!"

Even before the submarine menace was brought under control in the North Atlantic, convoy duty was at many times the most monotonous form of duty to which a combat ship could be assigned. There would be days on end when there would not be the faintest sign of a sub and, while the men on the slow-moving, defenseless cargo ships never complain about that, the crews of the escort vessels live in hopes of a chance to match wits with the enemy. In spite of the

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numbers of subs which the Nazis kept at sea in the early, desperate months of the war, however, the chances of engaging one of them actually were small.

Day in, day out, the sound gear on the cutters would keep up its ceaseless *pinging* without producing the staccato echoing *ping-ping* which indicates a possible contact. Contrary to the widespread general belief, nobody aboard our escort ships spends any time these days listening for the sound of submarine propellers or engines. The detection gear just doesn't work that way. But—we won't go into that. The point is that the escort crews suffered more from boredom and bad weather than they did at the hands of the submarines.

After the U-boats took to operating extensively on the surface at night, using gunfire instead of torpedoes as much as possible, the situation was even worse for the escort crews. For, while the detection gear frequently would disclose the presence of a surfaced U-boat, the latter almost always had sufficient speed simply to run away from the combat cutters. Often they didn't even bother to submerge; they just figuratively made an insulting five-fingered gesture and ran out of range of the cutters' guns.

That's the way it had been with the *Spencer*, a sister ship of the *Campbell*, on a trip to the United Kingdom in the spring of 1943. For three days the weather had been foul, giving neither officers nor men much chance to rest. Time after time, they had picked up submarines only to have the



## COMBAT CUTTERS

quarry give them the slip. The resultant sense of frustration put all the men on edge. Tempers were shortened.

Then, in one of a number of parallels with the *Campbell's* exploit the preceding February, the *Spencer* was sent off from the convoy to rescue survivors from a torpedoed British freighter. The latter had been loaded with lumber and stayed afloat for hours after being hit by the torpedo. She was unsalvageable, however, and the *Spencer* had to sink her with gunfire to prevent her becoming a menace to navigation.

Shortly after rejoining her convoy, the *Spencer* made a contact with a U-boat. "G.Q." sounded about 3:00 A.M., bringing the sleepy-eyed officers and men of the off-watch thudding along darkened passageways and up ladders to their battle stations, cursing in their inimitable fashion as they wrestled into their foul-weather clothing and life jackets.

"When I get out of this man's service," cracked a little gun-pointer, "I'm going to have one of these alarm buzzers right in my bedroom. I'm going to let it go off in the middle of the night—just once—and then I'm going to smash the hell out of it and go back to sleep!"

The U-boat was some distance ahead, obviously lying in wait for the rich prize which the *Spencer* was helping to shepherd across the ocean. Responding to the demand from the bridge for full speed ahead, the 327-footer settled her stern a bit deeper in the water and surged forward. Never-

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theless, she was no speedboat and suddenly word reached the gun crews that the sub was diving. Apparently she didn't want to run this time for fear of getting too far away from the oncoming convoy.

"Son-of-a-bitch," growled a gunner's mate. "We won't get to fire."

He was right, for when the *Spencer* swept across the supposed location of the enemy, Commander Harold S. Berdine confined himself to lobbing a pair of depth charges off the "K" guns.

Hunching down into the collars of their sheepskin jackets, officers on the bridge peered into the murky night for some sign of the effect of the explosions. They were not optimistic, however, for they had been through this sort of thing before. So they were not disappointed when the skipper gave up the attack and ordered them to "secure from general quarters." Those who did not have the watch on deck promptly headed for wardroom and galley for a shot of hot coffee and then "hit the sack" for some more sleep. Only the old-timers slept, however.

They were routed out again in about two hours for another inconclusive attack. Again results could not be determined and the *Spencer* resumed position on the flank of the convoy. Everyone was on the alert, straining to catch a glimpse of the feathery wake that would mean the periscope of the lurking U-boat.

Suddenly, about 10:00 A.M., those magical mechanical de-

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tectors scored again. This time there was no doubt. A sub was dangerously close to the on-plodding convoy.

Again the *Spencer's* twin screws began thrusting her forward at her best speed. Depth charges rained down on the spot at which the sub was last detected and the *Spencer* wheeled for another attack. The sound gear disclosed the U-boat going ever deeper and deeper.

Aboard the submarine, it was learned from prisoners later, the situation was desperate.

"The *Wasserbombes*, the *Wasserbombes*, they were terrible," a Nazi crew member related shortly after his capture.

He and his mates had been told by the U-boat skipper that they were going to attack a small convoy, one which had very little protection in the way of escort ships. It would be good hunting—and easy.

"Either he was lying to sustain the morale of his crew," said one of the *Spencer's* men, "or else he just didn't take a good look at us, for our convoy was the biggest we ever had taken across and, in addition to another combat cutter, we had a flock of Canadian corvettes to help out."

All the lights went out in the submarine after the first pattern of depth charges in the ten-o'clock attack let go. Slowly the sub began to settle and her crew thought they were going to the bottom, there to die a horrible, slow death. Feverishly they worked to restore buoyancy and thus regain control. It was an hour and a half, however, before they had any success. Meanwhile the *Spencer* waited.

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At one point it seemed as though the sub's skipper was brazenly going to try to come up between the lanes of the convoy where he would be almost sure to score hits if he could get his torpedoes fired. Berdine kept the *Spencer* hot on the trail, dodging in and out between the lumbering merchantmen, determined to give the U-boat no chance to get set for its devilish work.

Ultimately the convoy dropped astern and both the *Duane* and the *Spencer* closed in for the kill. They no longer had to fear that their depth charges would explode too close to some of the ships they were trying to protect.

Suddenly one of the *Spencer's* lookouts shouted:

"Conning tower on the port quarter!"

The teamwork of the two cutters, methods of co-operation they had practiced for months, came into play then. Guns of both ships trained swiftly on the tiny target and hurled salvo after salvo into it. Despite that hail of steel, some members of the sub's crew gained the deck and tried to make for their own guns. There was a lot of fight in them still, in spite of their harrowing experience undersea.

The *Spencer's* crew were yelling like the cheering section at a college football game—using, possibly, more short ugly words than the collegians would employ in mixed company.

"Throw some more lead at 'em," they urged the gunners. "Get the dirty bastards."

No urging was necessary, though, while the Germans showed any sign of fight and they kept right on pumping

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shells at the conning tower, now almost severed from the hull, as Commander Berdine swung the *Spencer* to a collision course and set out to apply the ramming technique which the *Campbell* had used so effectively a few months before.

That settled the German's hash, robbed them of all interest in the war or any further fighting. One after another they began dropping into the sea which soon was dotted with their bobbing heads. Some of them were wearing the submariner's escape lung, others bright yellow life jackets. A few had managed to get life rafts into the water and clambered onto them.

The "supermen" were a sad-looking lot about that time. Many of them were hysterical, completely unnerved by their ordeal, and pleading for help and mercy.

Like her sister ships, the *Spencer* swiftly became a rescue vessel and set about fishing the survivors out of the water. There were forty all told.

At first they refused to eat anything but bread and jelly, but the *Spencer's* men were being served good corned beef and aromatic cabbage that day and the combination was too much for even a Nazi's will power. Soon the majority of the prisoners were hard at work on steaming plates of the famous combination.

One of the busiest men aboard the *Spencer* that day didn't do any of the fighting but he made one of the finest pictorial records of the destruction of a U-boat that has ever

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been filmed. He is Chief Boatswain's Mate Jess W. "Jack" January, for fifteen years one of the ablest newspaper photographers in St. Louis, Missouri.

The light wasn't too good during the action but, by using a telephoto lens for almost every shot and four-by-five film, he recorded practically every phase of the engagement from the firing of the first "K" gun until the sub's tail hovered exactly vertical for a moment before the final plunge.

"I wasn't always polite in getting into vantage spots that day," January recalled with a grin. "I just shouldered officers and men alike aside all the way from the flying bridge to the fantail. But when the prints were passed around, nobody minded much."

Another good journalistic break occurred on that trip, too, for one of the *Spencer's* passengers was *Time* Magazine's war correspondent, William Walton, who was being given transportation to England. Needless to say, he got a colorful story for his editors.

Not all the excitement aboard a combat cutter is directly involved in fighting the U-boats. For example, take the story of one of the greatest sea rescues in history. Two combat cutters, the *Escanaba* and one whose name has not yet been released by the Navy Department, participated in the operation.

On a wintry night early in 1943 in the North Atlantic, a medium-sized American passenger ship was plowing through icy seas. All on board were jittery, for it was their

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thirteenth night out. Several times during the preceding two days they had spotted enemy planes circling the convoy high overhead. That meant only one thing. The wolf packs would be waiting for them.

Although not identified by the Navy as a troopship in the ordinary sense of the word, the vessel was crowded with service personnel and civilians en route to and from outposts.

Sometime after midnight the blow fell. A torpedo struck the vessel amidships and she began to go down. The explosion, said Ship's Cook George Dunningham, was "like the slamming of a bulkhead door." Most of the lighting circuit was knocked out and attempts to launch boats were well-nigh fruitless. Soon literally hundreds of men were in the icy water, the temperature of which was two degrees below freezing. In the wake of three days of bad weather, high seas still were running.

Little red rescue lights attached to the men's life jackets, a wartime development of the Coast Guard, showed where each man was.

"It looked like a weird, strange dream," Dunningham said of the scene.

Just after dawn, one of the 327-foot cutters hove in sight and Dunningham said her symmetrically terraced superstructure brought shouts of delight from the men with strength enough to yell.

"She was the most beautiful ship in the world," he added.

Her crew threw ropes to the exhausted, half-frozen men

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and hauled them aboard. Some, of course, were too far gone to help themselves and, in such cases, the Coast Guardsmen tied lines about their own bodies and plunged into the freezing water to bring them alongside.

The first cutter was joined by a second later in the day and, although both were interrupted in their rescue work several times by the necessity of making swift dashes away to attack U-boats seeking still other victims, they managed to pull a total of 222 survivors aboard from one ship and thirteen from another.

More than 850 United States soldiers, sailors and civilians died as a result of that night's work by the Nazis, but the disaster would have been even worse except for the work of the Coast Guard's combat cutters.

In contrast to World War I, when the Coast Guard lost only the cutter *Tampa*—which, incidentally, was the severest United States naval loss of that conflict—it had lost five ships in the current war up to the time this was being written.

The *Hamilton*, one of the 327-footers, was torpedoed off the entrance to Reykjavik harbor just after it had turned over to a Navy tug a damaged freighter which it had towed at slow speed for the preceding six days, an easy mark for any U-boat that might have happened along. She did not sink immediately, however, and a determined effort was made to get her to safety. That phase of the disaster, by the way, has become the subject of a controversy among Coast Guard officers which probably never will be settled.



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Briefly, the argument centers on the question of whether the crippled cutter should have been towed stern first or bow first. She had been hit slightly aft of 'midships and had begun to settle by the stern when the salvage operation was started. A towing hawser was passed from her bow to the rescue vessel and the precarious trip to port got under way. It was futile, however, for the stern soon was too deep in the water to permit the 2,000-ton craft to be moved and she soon slipped beneath the waves.

Proponents of the reverse tactics contend that had the tow line been affixed to the stern at the outset, it would have taken much of the strain and given the damaged vessel a better chance of survival. The experts disagree . . .

The other cutters lost were the *Escanaba*, *Muskeget* and *Natsek* in the North Atlantic and the *Acacia* in the Caribbean.

Complete mystery surrounds the fate of the *Natsek* which just disappeared one night while on convoy escort duty. The thermometer was well below freezing and all the ships were having difficulty with ice forming topsides. One skipper reported that he had had his entire crew on deck and in the rigging chopping ice for thirty-six hours with virtually no letup. They used axes, hammers, spanners and any other sort of weapon they could find.

It is surmised that the *Natsek's* crew proved unable to cope with the task, too much ice formed on her top hamper and she just rolled over and sank with all hands.

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Just a few weeks after her heroic rescue exploit, the *Es-canaba* was gone following an explosion of "undetermined nature." All hands but two enlisted men were lost with her.

Months later Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll, commander-in-chief of the Atlantic Fleet, awarded posthumous decorations and commendations to six of her officers and men for their gallantry in the rescue incident.

Imperishable naval history has been written by the men of the Coast Guard's combat cutters in the course of getting American fighting men and their weapons safely through the submarine zones, but the service's job did not stop there for, from the beginning of the war, the Navy looked to the Coast Guard for help in the actual landing of troops on enemy-held shores.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE INVADERS

LONG before an American soldier or marine set foot on a hostile shore in World War II, the amphibious nature of the conflict was clear to the Navy. It was obvious that before the United States could strike decisively at her enemies, troops would have to be transported overseas to do it. The enemy would not make docks or other port facilities available to us for the purpose, naturally, so that meant the troops would have to land on the enemy's beaches, regardless of the surf or of the opposition offered.

Our Navy is traditionally a blue-water navy, trained to meet and defeat our enemies on the high seas and to keep the conflict thousands of miles from United States shores. Except for the Marine Corps, it did not have large numbers of "white-water sailors," men skilled in the handling of small boats and landing them through surf.

Consequently, one of the first things the Navy did after Pearl Harbor was to call on the Coast Guard for hundreds of men to handle so-called invasion barges—landing craft ranging all the way from the now-famous thirty-six-foot Higgins boats to 370-foot tank-lighters known as LST's—and to train thousands more to handle them. At once the

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Coast Guard brought 1,000 of its ace surfmen, lifeboat crews from its lifesaving stations up and down the nation's beaches, to Washington. From there they were sent to training centers where they familiarized themselves with the new type of craft and later trained with the amphibious forces of the Army and Navy.

When the Marines went ashore at Tulagi and Guadalcanal that August morning in 1942, it was Coast Guard surfmen—or invaders, as they now are known—who put them there. A couple of months later they also put the Army ashore at Casablanca, Fedala and Safi despite surf conditions that threatened for a time to prevent the invasion. And in the following July, I saw them repeat the performances on the beaches of Sicily.

In any discussion of amphibious landings, the crews of the landing barges, particularly the little thirty-six-foot jobs, are frequently overlooked—rather, they are overshadowed in the mind of the layman who thinks chiefly of the ordeal faced by the soldier passengers of those boats when they have to wade ashore under enemy fire. It often is the case, however, that the first man to face that fire is the coxswain of the landing craft, the man whose job it is to steer the boat safely through the surf and beach it in a position from which the infantrymen will be able to get ashore and dig themselves in with the least possible delay.

Although some of the later types of landing barges have had armored shelters known as "cheese boxes" provided for

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the helmsman, more often than not he is standing in full view of the enemy, handling the tiller and throttle from his position on the craft's fantail. Stories of the stark heroism of those men, of their calm, determined handling of the boats despite the worst the enemy could do, are legion. Of course not even a tenth of them will ever be recorded, for usually such deeds are performed when tension is at its height and every individual aboard has room for little else in his mind but the burning question of what the next few minutes hold for him. The atmosphere is, to say the least, not conducive to deliberate, objective historical writing.

On the other hand, it is fairly safe to assume that many of the exploits of the invaders which have been preserved are fairly typical insofar as they illustrate the extreme hazards under which these Coast Guardsmen operate. Personally, I am ready to maintain that every member of an invasion-barge crew who leaves the comparative security of a big troopship in the dead of night and heads for a strange and hostile beach five or ten miles distant, qualifies for a hero's reward before he ever hears a shot fired in anger against him.

At Sicily, for example, the boat crews had a bad sea condition to contend with first of all. All the afternoon prior to "D" day, as the invasion day was known, our huge armada had plowed through rising seas whipped into fury by a forty-knot wind. At times we thought it might be necessary for the high command to postpone the assault because it looked as though the Higgins boats and their like just

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could not live in such rough water and, even if they did, would be bound to capsize in the surf.

Miraculously, after our convoy had steamed past the proud little island of Malta, whose inimitable defense had made the invasion of Sicily a possibility at that time, the wind began to moderate and the heavy seas to subside into something more like the Mediterranean placidity to which we had become accustomed in the preceding three weeks. So the invasion went ahead almost as scheduled, but that does not mean it was then all beer and skittles for the landing boats. They still had plenty of trouble.

Adding to the mental hazard for all concerned, just about the time we were able to quit worrying about the weather, the antiaircraft defenses ashore behind Scoglitti and up around the Comiso airfield opened up with a terrific display. Red and green tracer fire laced the sky with weird yet grimly beautiful patterns.

"That tears it," growled a grizzled signalman on the bridge of the destroyer I was aboard. "No chance of surprising those birds. They're up and ready for business."

All hands felt sure that any moment the shore batteries would discover the presence of the invasion armada and open up on us.

Seeing that display of activity ashore—we learned later it was directed against United States paratroops and air-borne infantry that had been flown in and landed a couple of hours before the shore landing was scheduled to begin—the crews

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of the landing boats must have had butterflies in their stomachs while they waited for the signal that would send them roaring toward the beach. The initial landing would be bad enough, but the veterans knew that the second or third waves of assault troops probably would encounter even heavier opposition than the first, because the enemy would know definitely then where the landing was being effected.

Yet no one faltered. And when dawn broke, I could see the orderly little lines of landing barges churning toward the various beaches in the area with their cargoes of men or matériel, and then scuttling back to their ships for more. Scattered along the beaches or piled in among forbidding rocks was a grimly substantial number of other landing craft which had failed to get off for a second trip. Men had died in some of those boats in the darkness while we watched, unseeing. But the others kept going.

In addition to running many of the smaller invasion craft, Coast Guard officers and men operated the larger types such as LCI's (Landing Craft, Infantry) and LST's (Landing Ship, Tanks) which also were run right onto the beaches wherever possible, their ramps lowered and their cargoes disgorged.

Other Coast Guardsmen served as beach masters, organizing the unloading operations and directing traffic to and from the beach.

At Gela, where some of the heaviest fighting of the first two days of the Sicilian invasion occurred, big, easygoing,

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cigar-loving Bill Forsythe, who is now a Coast Guard petty officer but who used to photograph Washington's great and near-great for the AP in the days before the war, went ashore to film the Coast Guard's activities. He was with a group of combat engineers and their LCI hit a sandbar about fifty yards from the beach, sticking fast.

"So we bailed out," Bill wrote later. "Luckily, I had had enough foresight to waterproof my equipment. With a .45 in one hand and a camera in the other, I started for the beach. Our Coast Guard gunners opened fire with two .30-caliber machine guns to give us a covering fire in order that we might have a chance to make it. The surf was so heavy that I was knocked under; when I came up the .45 was full of sand and couldn't be fired.

"I was completely soaked and cold as hell but I ran up on the beach. I never ran so fast in all my life, but it seemed very slow—water-soaked clothing certainly drags one down.

"The enemy fire was intense. To my right about 300 yards an LCI was on the beach and unable to get off; and to my left, at a distance of about 500 yards, was an Italian fort that kept firing on the LCI and shelling the landing boats and keeping the beach under fire, with me in the middle. The beach was mined, but this was unknown to us at the time and there we were digging for dear life—and I do mean life."

Throughout the three days his ship was anchored off the Sicilian beach, it and the other transports were under re-





U. S. Coast Guard Photo

#### RAMPS DOWN

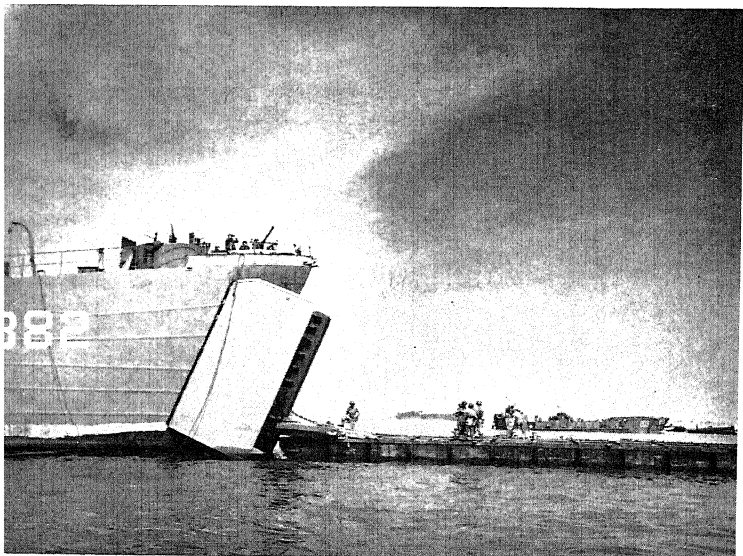
Troops with bayonets fixed rush ashore as the ramps of Coast Guard-manned invasion barges smack down into the water, during intensive rehearsal of invasion tactics on the East Coast. The skill in handling boats in treacherous surf acquired by Coast Guardsmen in peacetime rescue operations is now being utilized in invasions.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

**"HERE COME THE AMERICANS!"**

U. S. Coast Guard landing barges off a South Pacific island.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

**END OF THE BRIDGE**

LST (Landing Ship, Tanks) during unloading operations.

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peated attack by German planes which dive-bombed and strafed them viciously. It was the sort of thing that rasps men's nerves raw, for despite the attacks the work of unloading the hundreds of tons of ammunition, thousands of gallons of gasoline and other explosive knickknacks went doggedly ahead. Any minute, the men knew, they might be engulfed in a flaming hell.

Bill Forsythe thought that was tough, and it was, but a scant two months later it was to seem a "pink tea" by comparison with what he and other American and British fighting men encountered when they landed around Salerno.

"When the first few assault waves went in at Salerno it was comparatively quiet," he wrote, "but when they landed and the ramps went down, the bottom dropped out. The Germans had concealed machine-gun nests that did a lot of damage to our first few waves. After daylight the Germans were pushed back from the beach about a mile and started laying it in with mortars and 88's."

Enemy air activity was light during the day because our own planes were providing a wonderful "umbrella" for the landing, but that night, Forsythe said, he thought "everybody in the German air force, even Goering himself, must have been flying over us."

The story of the Coast Guard invaders can't be dissociated from that of the crews of the assault transports, or "combat loaders" as they are known in the amphibious forces. Coast Guard officers and enlisted men manned a growing number

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of those ships as the war progressed. They are known as "combat loaders" because they must carry not only the troops but all the equipment and supplies that those troops will need to enable them to operate ashore until such time as reinforcements can be brought in. What is most important, the matériel and supplies must be put aboard the ship in such a priority that the troops can hit the beach fighting, knowing that the things they need first will be unloaded first.

Amphibious invasions usually are launched at night, so the initial unloading of assault transports must be done in complete blackout and often under enemy attack. Months of training are required to give the crews proficiency in the difficult, dangerous work. Night after night before they left the United States, the crews would go through "dry runs" in some peaceful American bay, lowering the invasion boats into the water, getting the troops over the side and down the cargo nets and following with jeeps, trucks and field guns.

The constant training drove them frantic at times, but when "H" hour finally arrived they were always thankful that they could work swiftly and surely in the dark. It explains the orderliness of the confusion that always obtains when the debarkation begins.

Nevertheless, no matter how well trained the crews may be, there's always something that goes wrong, something which cannot be guarded against. A lean, hard-bitten lieu-

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tenant who had been a warrant officer in the years before the war told me of some of those things on the way back from Sicily.

"We had a ton-and-a-quarter truck boomed out over the side, just ready to lower it into the boat," he related, an amused grin flickering across his features as he recalled the scene. "The kid on the hoisting engine must have got a little rattled or misunderstood the signals, because he two-blocked the damn thing with only a few feet of cable between the truck and the tip of the boom. Of course the cable snapped like string.

"I thought, 'There goes one truck which won't see much fighting,' but, believe it or not, it just dropped into the barge on all four wheels, bounced a couple of times and settled down right where it belonged."

This wasn't the only lucky break his ship had that night. Sometime after daybreak, when the enemy bombers had departed, someone noticed that the cable on one of the cargo booms had been struck by a bullet and all but a couple of strands severed! How long they had worked with it like that, with all sorts of mechanized swords of Damocles swinging over their heads, no one knew.

Feverishly they began clearing the well deck in case the jeep then in the air should fall. Steel beams, lumber and an assortment of soldiers' gear were pitched into the scuppers. A little later the lieutenant made the horrifying discovery that in the soldiers' gear was a bagful of hand grenades, a

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couple of which had been wedged under one of the beams when they were hurled aside! It was impossible to tell whether the safety pins had been knocked out of them in the rough handling, and of course, nobody dared move the beams to find out. Finally the lieutenant got down on his belly, reached in gingerly and felt along the detonating levers of the bombs. All but one of them still had the safety pins in place.

The other one was wedged in such a position that it could not be grasped firmly. The lieutenant could get only the tips of his fingers on the detonating lever. Nevertheless he ordered the beam hoisted up, praying that the grenade would not roll. It didn't and he got a good grip.

"Then I pitched it toward shore," he said, "almost hoping it would hit the damn soldier that left it on the deck."

Aboard another transport, they had two vehicles in the air at once over the forward well deck—a truck and a bulldozer. The ship was rolling heavily and almost simultaneously the guide lines attached to each vehicle carried away. Then the fun began. First the truck and then the bulldozer would swing far out over the water and come crashing back against various items of the vessel's superstructure, tearing out huge chunks of metal and scattering them about the deck like shrapnel. Before the crew could get the plunging, surging vehicles under control again, they felt that nothing the enemy could do to them would matter thereafter.

At the time this is written, the landings around Salerno

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were the most heavily opposed of the war for American troops. It was obvious that the Germans had had advance information as to what was planned, doubtless because Lieutenant General Mark Wayne Clark didn't have much of a choice geographically. At any rate, the Germans were on hand in force and the fight they put up left our men with no illusions about the magnitude of their task. The transports were under heavy fire not only during the approach to Italy and while they were unloading but even after they had begun to withdraw.

Facing death almost hourly has more than a hardening, sobering effect on fighting men. In the words of another Coast Guard Chief Photographer's Mate, John Folk, we can see that at such times men turn instinctively to religion.

"We were given a 'going away' present by the Jerries that will burn forever in my memory—and everyone's on board," Folk wrote to a superior.

"But God rode the bridge with us again on this trip, and after my cruise to date, I am certainly humble in His presence. Please inform Headquarters that there are no atheists on board this ship."

In the gripping record of the Coast Guard's part in this war, the emphasis almost always is on the dramatic highlights. Current historians—or, as John Mason Brown described war correspondents, the "forward echelon of history"—seem to have little room in their columns for comedy. And yet even war has many lighter moments.

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For example, in the initial hours of the North African invasion, a comic incident occurred which had at once its dramatic and potentially disastrous sides. As the story goes, the first Americans to enter Casablanca were a couple of Coast Guard enlisted men who, in some manner, had become separated from their unit on the beach and set out for the town.

Blissfully unaware apparently, that Casablanca had not been taken up to that point, the pair are said to have strode boldly down one of the principal streets, shooting out street lamps with their .45's. Fortunately for them, and possibly for the outcome of the operations at that point, some friendly French souls whisked the Coast Guardsmen off the street and harbored them until the town was safely in American control. If true, the incident may go down in history as one of the few cases in which one or more war correspondents, having unwittingly got ahead of their troops, did not enter the town first and receive the plaudits of the citizenry.

It was on the other side of the world that the invaders got their first taste of amphibious warfare when they took the Marines into Tulagi and Guadalcanal. In its initial phases, the Solomons campaign was different from subsequent sea-borne invasions because Jap sea power in the area was very great. They sank four Allied cruisers the first night of the landing, which seriously weakened the American position and forced the transports to withdraw before they had completed unloading.



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This left the Marines in a precarious position. Food and medical supplies were almost nonexistent and even ammunition was scarce. When the going was toughest, the Coast Guardsmen pitched right in with the troops. Some of the invaders dug machine-gun emplacements; others joined artillerymen manning guns and still others went with the infantry. At the same time they kept a number of the small boats operating a "sneak" daylight shuttle service across the eighteen-mile stretch of water between Guadalcanal and Tulagi, dodging not only Jap planes but fire from enemy shore batteries, in the vital business of bringing supplies to the defenders of Henderson Field.

As the battle for the island and its crucial airfield developed more and more into an aerial struggle, one of the functions performed by the Coast Guard landing boats was to patrol offshore whenever an air fight was going on overhead, so as to be on hand to pick up any American pilots who happened to have to bail out. On one occasion a landing boat, commanded by a Coast Guard coxswain, started for a Jap flier who had "hit the silk" after his Zero had burst into flames. Just then the American pilot who had shot him down was hit by another Jap plane and he, too, was forced to bail out. The landing boat went first to the rescue of the American and picked him up. Then it headed for the Jap but, as they drew near, that Son of Heaven whipped out his pistol and fired at the American pilot. Nothing happened, so the Nip put the pistol to his own head and pulled the

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trigger twice. Again the gun failed to fire, so rather than be picked up, he dived for the propellers apparently hoping to put an end to himself that way.

One of the boat's crew was too quick for him, however, and hooked him under the chin with a boat hook and pulled him aboard. He still continued to fight his rescuers until one of the crew walloped him in the stomach with a five-gallon gasoline can and another clipped him on the chin, knocking him cold.

Some of the Coast Guardsmen were on Guadalcanal for ninety days, during the height of the Jap's savage attempts to retake that bastion. Typical of their experiences was that of James D. Fox, twenty-nine, of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, who underwent 112 bombings and was under shellfire thirty times during his three-month stay there. When he left to recuperate from malaria, he had lost thirty-five pounds.

After spending the first two days and nights of the invasion in transporting Marines and supplies to the beach, Fox and his fellow invaders were told to take their boats offshore, anchor and get some sleep.

"We didn't get much sleep, though," Fox related ruefully. "It was raining as hard as I've ever seen it come down, which made it mighty uncomfortable to begin with. Then, just as we were getting accustomed to the elements, the Jap fleet let go with all it had at our ships offshore. The battle lasted all night—the most terrific naval fight I've ever seen, and

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while it was spectacular as a fireworks display, it wasn't very soothing."

Sleep was out of the question not only that night, but for many nights to follow. It got so bad the men dubbed the place "Sleepless Lagoon."

A name that will live in invader legend wherever Coast Guardsmen gather is that of Douglas A. Munro, a twenty-three-year-old signalman from South Cle Elum, Washington. A lot of Marines will remember him, too, for they owe him their lives.

Munro was in command of a detachment of ten landing boats assigned to take the Marines to a point on Guadalcanal where an attack was to be launched on a Jap position. The Marines landed all right, but this was one occasion where they did not immediately get the situation well in hand. The Jap opposition was much heavier than had been anticipated and it at once became apparent that the Marines would have to be evacuated or face annihilation.

Munro at once volunteered for the task and took his boats back under heavy enemy fire. When most of the 500 Marines had boarded the boats, the rear guard was taking terrific punishment. Munro saw that and maneuvered his boat into a position where it would serve as at least partial cover for the remaining Marines while they embarked. The majority of the Marines gained the comparative safety of the landing boats, but Munro was riddled by gunfire before he could get out of range.

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He regained consciousness later, but although he must have been suffering greatly, he had no thought of himself. The outcome of his mission was uppermost in his mind, for while he lived only long enough to utter four words, they were:

“Did they get off?”

Upon being answered in the affirmative, a smile lighted his face and he closed his eyes.

For his “conspicuous gallantry” during the evacuation and for the skill with which he planned it, Munro was awarded posthumously the coveted Congressional Medal of Honor, the only Coast Guardsman up to that point so honored. His citation said that he and his courageous comrades of the boat crew, two of whom were wounded, “undoubtedly saved the lives of many who otherwise would have perished.”

One of the most publicized of the Coast Guard-manned transports is the U.S.S. *Wakefield*, the former palatial liner *Manhattan*. When the Japs were advancing on their relentless drive toward Singapore, the *Wakefield* was ordered to the beleaguered city to evacuate women and children refugees.

It was a tough assignment because of the almost complete control of the air exercised by the Nipponese. Even before she reached the city, the mercy ship was attacked by a lone Jap bomber. That proved to be a mistake on his part, for

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he was shot down by concentrated antiaircraft fire and the *Wakefield* proceeded on her mission.

The enemy was scarcely twenty-five miles from the city when the ship entered the harbor and was subjecting the entire area to heavy bombardment and sending over flights of from eighteen to thirty bombers at intervals of fifteen minutes.

For two days the *Wakefield* endured that sort of punishment and seemed to bear a charmed existence. During that time she lay tied up to the dock and managed to embark some 300 women and children and their belongings. As she was attempting to slip out of the harbor, however, a bomb pierced the deck and exploded in the sick bay killing five members of the crew. A short time later the docks which the *Wakefield* left were bombed into a smoking ruin.

Months after that narrow squeak, the *Wakefield* figured in another dramatic rescue at sea. This time, however, it was in the chill North Atlantic and it was the *Wakefield* that needed help. The once proud queen of the United States merchant fleet was being swept by fire. Fortunately help was not far off. A United States light cruiser, which later was to play a brilliant part in the invasion of North Africa, came speeding to the scene.

Disregarding the danger to his own craft and thinking only of the helpless passengers and crew aboard the burning ship, the captain of the cruiser ran her alongside the *Wakefield*—"just like he was docking a ferryboat," one of the

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cruiser's gunners told me later—and by the use of ropes and cargo nets managed to take off the entire company of about 900 passengers and crew. In point of view of the numbers saved, as well as for other reasons, it stands out as one of the greatest sea rescues of all time.

The *Wakefield* did not perish ignominiously on that occasion. She was towed to port and, judging by other salvage miracles wrought by American shipbuilders, it would not be surprising if she resumed her career in better shape than ever.

In the intense fighting which characterized the first couple of days of the North African invasion, the assault transport *Chase*, manned by Coast Guardsmen, gave such a good account of herself that the enemy began warning their pilots to "keep away from the ship with the windows in her stacks." On one occasion, while anchored off the beach near Algiers, a submarine fired a spread of torpedoes at the *Chase*. One of the "tin fish" went between her bow and the anchor chain and another slipped harmlessly under her fantail.

As part of the training for the North African show, the *Chase* and other American transports participated in a mock invasion of the Scottish coast—up near Inverness. It was an occasion which opened the eyes of many an American soldier and sailor, for taking the part of the "defenders" of the area were troops of the famous Scottish Black Watch Regiment, veterans of Dunkirk and other bloody struggles.

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"We couldn't see a thing," said Wood, "but I stood there, just gripping that splinter shield and waiting for it. I felt sure we were going to get a torpedo in our belly."

Instead, there was a dull boom immediately astern of them and then the *Avenger's* flight deck buckled like a shingle broken in the middle. A terrific flash reddened the inky sky and planes tossed into the air by the blast could be seen through the flames.

Wood, a thirty-four-year-old New Yorker, is a talented artist who has transferred many of his impressions of amphibious warfare to canvas since being stationed at Coast Guard headquarters in Washington on temporary duty. After the tragic death of the late Lieutenant Commander McClelland Barclay, Wood took over many of the former's assignments for illustrations depicting various phases of naval warfare. By a coincidence, his place on the *Chase* was taken by another Coast Guard artist, Godeby Lawrence.

From the Pacific war zone came the story of one of the outstanding exhibitions of personal endurance and courage of the war. It is the story of a Coast Guard coxswain who maintained that he "didn't have the guts" to commit suicide!

After a night patrol near Savo Island in the Solomons, Coxswain Robert J. Canavan headed his thirty-six-foot Higgins boat back toward Guadalcanal. The night had been uneventful but the little boat and its crew were not destined to finish their cruise in peace, for a light cruiser rounded the western end of Guadalcanal while they still were some dis-

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tance from their base. Although she flew no ensign, she did not leave the boys long in doubt as to her nationality, for as soon as her light guns were within range she opened fire.

At first Canavan tried to escape by making a run for Tulagi but his boat was hopelessly outmatched in both speed and firepower, and after the first few bursts from the cruiser everyone but Canavan abandoned his boat.

"I'll see you in Hell, Bob!" shouted Charles Stickney, Boatswain's Mate, first class, as he dived over the side.

Canavan said he had some faint hope of beaching the boat, so he remained at the wheel in a crouching position. However, when the Japs riddled the instrument panel and damaged the wheel, he figured the time had come for him, too, to abandon the scene. He went over the side, leaving the engine running so the Japs kept up their pursuit of the little boat which by that time was beginning to resemble a sieve. Finally they knocked the engine out of commission, pulled alongside and stripped some of the equipment from the craft and then sank it.

Still not satisfied, the cruiser swung off to where the other members of the boat's crew were struggling in the water. She had passed within fifty feet of Canavan but, having discarded his life jacket before he left the boat, he feigned death and the Jap gunners apparently were fooled.

When the cruiser reached the others from Canavan's boat, she halted for several minutes and Canavan could hear the rattle of her machine guns.



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"When she moved on," he said, "none of the boys was visible. . . ."

Realizing that the current would sweep him ashore at Jap positions if he tried to reach Guadalcanal, Canavan set out to swim to Toraï which was thirteen miles distant.

"I kept humming all the songs I knew in an effort to keep my spirits up," he related. "Twice it rained heavily. Each time the sky darkened and the sea got choppy. I did more praying in those hours I spent in the water than I had done in the previous twenty years of my life. *Three times I gave up and tried to drown myself, but I didn't have the guts.*"

Nineteen hours later, after a swimming feat which few professional marathoners could equal, Bob reached Florida Island and dragged himself ashore. He slept until dawn and then set out in search of help. There still were some heart-breaking experiences ahead of him, however.

Several times during the day he passed through deserted native villages but it was twilight before he found a populated place—and then the villagers couldn't understand English or his needs. Again he spent the night in the comparative safety of the bush, resuming his quest for a Marine encampment as soon as it was daylight. He saw a boatload of marines passing the island at one point, but all his efforts to attract their attention failed.

Finally he reached a spot where Florida Island was separated from Tulagi by only 400 yards of water. On the other side Canavan could see a Marine encampment. Despite his

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weakness from hunger and exertion, he realized that his only hope of reaching the camp before he collapsed was to *swim that 400 yards!* He did it, but again came perilously close to death, for the marines spotted him and were all for shooting before he could get across. They thought he must be a Jap up to some devilish trick.

The lieutenant in charge decided to take a chance, though, and not only saved his life then, but again when he hauled the exhausted youth ashore after he had collapsed in the surf.

The climax to Canavan's story had not been reached, however, for after recuperating at a base hospital, he was ordered to another South Pacific base. In the normal course of events he probably would have been sent back to the States to get over his harrowing experiences. But he was not satisfied to let events take their normal course and instead of following orders, he stowed away on a transport plane bound for Guadalcanal and reported to his commanding officer for duty immediately upon his arrival!

Retribution for the butchery on the part of the Jap cruiser was exacted a short time later for, after the cruiser had shelled Tulagi, she was attacked by a Flying Fortress, one of the first seen in the area, which dropped a bomb squarely on her stern. For a time the cruiser ran in circles apparently as a result of damage to her rudder, but then managed to get under way. The plane came back at that point, however, and reported sinking the Jap in Sealark Channel.

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Teamwork has been responsible for much of the success of American fighting men in this war, and that applies in the Coast Guard fully as much as in any other branch of the services. Yet every once in a while a rugged individualist, a maverick, turns up who just doesn't conform to the pattern.

Take C. L. Jacobson, seaman first, from Mobile, Alabama, for example. He was one of the landing-boat coxswains on Guadalcanal. Normally he would be in command of two other men—the engineer and a deck hand. Jacobson was different, however. He felt that other people cramped his style, were always getting in his way. So he got permission to run his boat by himself.

Going in to a beach for a landing, he'd leave the wheel, dash forward and lower the ramp, race back to the wheel and throttle the engine down for the landing. With no great originality on their part, his shipmates dubbed him the "Lone Wolf."

This chronicling of the exploits of the Coast Guardsmen is not intended as an effort to portray the men of the service as all heroes or supermen. Most of them will admit frankly that they were scared to death when under fire. And in almost any gathering of those who have been in action, you can hear stories of the hardened old chiefs who became so jittery over the prospect of being torpedoed that they would sleep at the base of the stacks, on the top decks, or even in the incinerators, rather than go below to their bunks. Some

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of them wouldn't even go to the galley to eat while in a war zone.

Such cases, of course, were in the minority, but even those men, scared as they were, did not fail to carry out their jobs. And when you get right down to cases, that's the stuff real heroes are made of, because after all it's not much of a trick to do something when you are *not* frightened.

With Coast Guardsmen fighting for freedom all over the globe, from Tulagi to Salerno, only the uninformed would refer to the servicemen as "five-fathom sailors," a term which used to rouse the ire of the blue-water Guardsmen.

But if you really want to let yourself in for something, just make a crack about the "Hooligan Navy" where a Coast Guardsman can hear you! In the old days, that used to be a favorite appellation for the Navy to hurl at the senior service. About the same thing as the marines who call all soldiers "dog face."

However, since the Coast Guard has expanded and, more especially, because of its brilliant war record, wise men are careful as to where and when they talk about the "Hooligan Navy." Nevertheless, slips do occur. . . .

In Casablanca one day, a group of Coast Guardsmen had been touring the town buying souvenirs—Arab slippers, hand-tooled leather bags for their best girls, goatskins, etc. Loaded down with their purchases, they were walking down to the dock "minding our own business" when some incautious Navy man sang out:

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"Hi, Hooligan!"

The biggest of the Coast Guardsmen stopped in his tracks as though he had walked into a brick wall.

"Take these a minute," he said to a companion holding out his bundles.

Well, by the time the Shore Patrol had restored order, an indeterminate number of Navy men were stretched out on the dock in need of attention. And the Coast Guardsmen? Report has it that one of them got his pants a little dirty.

As a war correspondent who travels with the Navy and thinks it's one of the world's finest outfits, I must say in extenuation of the foregoing story that I didn't witness the event personally and no doubt the Navy was outnumbered at the time or hadn't slept well the night before, or something.

This book is supposed to be primarily an account of the Coast Guard's part in World War II. But it is a story of ships as well as of men, so the saga would not be complete without some mention being made of the glorious finales to the careers of the cutters *Pontchartrain* and *Sebago*, despite the fact that they belonged to the British at the time.

Those ships were among the ten 250-foot cutters transferred to Britain before the United States entered the war, so literally what happened to them after that is part of the history of the Royal Navy. However, among seafaring men the world over, ships have personalities that are just as real as those of individuals, and Coast Guardsmen will always

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think pridefully of the crowning achievement of the *Pontchartrain* and the *Sebago*, just as though they had never left the service.

When the British took them over, they changed their names to the H.M.S. *Hartland* and the H.M.S. *Walney*. Practically nothing was heard of them until the Allied invasion of North Africa.

On the night of the landings, the *Hartland* and the *Walney* were standing in toward the Mediterranean harbor of Oran, a well-fortified French naval base. Sheer mountains which rise to a height of about 1,000 feet gird the anchorage, and a long concrete jetty thrusts diagonally across the mouth of the bay, making a narrow entrance and forcing any incoming ship to run close under the guns of lowering shore batteries. Of course that narrow passage was protected by an antisubmarine net.

Because of the scarcity of good landing beaches in the vicinity and possibly because of some uncertainty as to whether the French garrison would resist, it was decided to attempt to force the entrance and land troops right in the city so that they could quickly take over any of the shore batteries which showed fight.

The presence of French warships in the harbor and the fact that the garrisons still had bitter memories of the day in 1940 when the British Mediterranean Fleet had shelled and sunk a number of ships of the French fleet in Oran and

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near-by Mers-el-Kebir did not make the task of the invaders any simpler.

Nevertheless the job had to be done and the ex-Coast Guard cutters *Pontchartrain* and *Sebago* were chosen to do the boom-forcing. It was a suicide assignment unquestionably, if the French decided to resist. And they did.

As the ships stole through the velvet blackness of the Mediterranean night, they suddenly were illuminated by brilliant searchlights placed on the surrounding hillsides so as to train directly on the harbor entrance. At once the shore batteries belched flame, followed shortly by the guns from the warships inside the jetty.

The thin skins of the two cutters could not withstand much of that sort of treatment, but it will be to the everlasting credit of both the ships and the dauntless men handling them that they did not give up the unequal struggle until they had shattered the boom, forced their way into the harbor and landed their troops!

Although many of the more colorful exploits of the invaders involve the crews of the little thirty-six-foot invasion barges, it should not be forgotten that the Coast Guard provided the officers and crews for many of the larger types of invasion craft—the 330-foot LST's which can and did cross the Atlantic under their own power and yet were of sufficiently shallow draft to run right up on the beaches of Sicily and Italy to disgorge substantial numbers of medium tanks, ready for the fight; and the smaller LCI's, likewise ocean-

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going craft designed to land approximately 200 fully equipped fighting men on hostile shores.

When the history of the current war is written, it may well be that the development of these unique landing craft will rank with such military turning points as the invention of the tank in World War I. Certainly the conduct of amphibious warfare against Fortress Europe would not have been possible without them, at least with such relatively small losses to the attackers as have been experienced to date.

It was in the invasion of Sicily that these new craft got their first test under actual battle conditions—and they came through with flying colors, both literally and figuratively. Built in the United States in one of the most remarkable emergency ship-construction programs that the pages of history have to offer, the LST's and the LCI's crossed the Atlantic several months before the assault on Sicily was launched.

For the most part they traveled a southern course and thereby escaped much bad weather. Nevertheless their shallow draft made it inevitable that they would be rough riders, and the way their officers and crews roll their eyes skyward when the subject is mentioned indicates how they feel about it. To hear them tell it, the little Canadian corvettes which, someone said, "will roll on wet grass," are churchlike in their stability by comparison.

On the other hand, the men who sail them are just as quick to laud their performances in the task for which they



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were specifically designed—landing on enemy-held beaches.

In contrast to the lightly opposed landings in Sicily, the invasion of Italy by the American-British Fifth Army was bitterly contested by the Germans. In addition to mines and strong points on the beaches, the Germans had many cunningly devised gun positions in the surrounding hills which also commanded the beaches. Employing tricks they used in Tunisia, particularly at the Kasserine Pass, they used small caves in which to hide their vicious 88's. Even their muzzle flashes could not be seen, making it difficult to locate them and even more difficult to knock them out. Seven days after the initial landings, some of those hidden batteries still were pouring a deadly fire into the beach parties; even the concentrated, accurate fire of warships could not silence them.

Coupled with the fanatical vigor with which the Luftwaffe pounded the invasion barges, these hidden batteries made the fighting around Salerno the fiercest that many of our men had encountered up to that time.

Lieutenant Howard L. Kleinoeder of Seattle, who commanded one of the LCI's, reported on his return to this country that the German fliers were almost foolhardy in their daring and persistence.

"They fought as if the fate of Europe hinged on the outcome of the Salerno battle," he said, "and they took one chance after another. They seemed to be doubling their efforts to make up for the surrender of the Italians, subject-

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ing the invasion flotillas to repeated bombing and strafing attacks."

At one point, two Coast Guard invasion craft were lying offshore early in the invasion when a Messerschmitt-109 swooped down low over the stern of the nearest ship and approached the second on the beam about amidships. It was Kleinoeder's LCI that the plane was after and all the German's guns were blazing almost at point-blank range.

The Coast Guard gun crews were fighting back, however, and succeeded in blasting the onrushing plane right out of the air. But not, however, before six members of the LCI's crew had been wounded.

There were times, Kleinoeder related, when the strength of the enemy seemed an impossible barrier, particularly those camouflaged 88's. A shot from one of them went through the bridge of a landing craft in his group, penetrating the bulkhead near the wheel, whizzing past the helmsman and then tearing through another bulkhead near the engine-room telegraph where a second man missed death only because he dropped to the deck instinctively.

The beach at Salerno was particularly good for the landing craft, shelving steeply from the water's edge, Kleinoeder said. That enabled the bows of the landing barges to be run right up on dry sand while still leaving plenty of water under the stern so that when the powerful Diesels were put in reverse, they could pull the ship back off the beach.

"That's important to us," Kleinoeder said, "because our

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missions always call for more than one landing. It's not just a case of getting one load ashore and then abandoning the ship."

Enemy-held beaches were not the only sources of peril to the Coast Guard's Invaders either. They shared the dangers of the men in the ships in which they crossed the seas to those beaches, and in all too many cases, died with them. The night the destroyer *Little* went down was a case in point.

The "Mighty Little," as her crew called her, was an old four-piper destroyer which had been converted into a Marine transport and had carried Leathernecks to Tulagi for the initial invasion of the Solomons. Coast Guard Invaders had handled the Higgins boats in which the Marines made the trip from the *Little* to the beach.

Twenty-one-year-old Boatswain's Mate Robert Schindler of Bayonne, New Jersey, one of the Invaders, recalled that there wasn't much trouble on that first landing. In fact, the *Little* shuttled around in the Solomons for a month without running into anything she couldn't take care of. One night, however, after they'd been circling slowly around in the harbor so as not to make too good a target for Jap subs, general quarters sounded. Unidentified craft had been detected approaching and all hands were ordered to battle stations. Schindler was an ammunition passer for one of the after guns.

Followed closely by the *Gregory*, a destroyer-transport of

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the same vintage, the *Little* tore out of the harbor at top speed in an effort to intercept the newcomer. The crew more or less expected it would turn out to be another American unit. The same thing had happened before, so they weren't particularly keyed up.

Theirs was a false sense of security that time, for out of the inky South Pacific night a dim shape loomed and just about the time the *Little* got within range, the shape belched tongues of flame. It was a Jap cruiser bombarding Tulagi. As it happened, the Japs were so intent on their deviltry that they didn't spot the onrushing United States destroyer at once. The *Little* veered off sharply so as to bring her bow and stern guns to bear. Just then a star shell split the darkness and the entire area was illuminated. A Jap searchlight snapped on, its blinding beam smack on the *Little*. The *Gregory's* automatic weapons hammered at the light.

The Japs were working too, for a salvo of eight-inch shells slammed across the *Little's* deck—about six inches high!

"It was a miracle," said Schindler. "They missed everything."

Such luck couldn't last at that range, though, and another salvo of three eight-inchers caught the after deck-house besides which Schindler and some thirty of his mates had been crouched a short time before.

Schindler felt himself picked up from the deck and hurled through the air. His last conscious thought was that at any rate he wouldn't have to worry about being churned to

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death by his own ship's propellers. When he came to in the water, the destroyer was burning fiercely—but some of her guns still were barking defiantly at the Jap.

In addition to being blown overboard, Schindler was literally filled with shrapnel by the salvo which hit the *Little's* deckhouse. Navy surgeons dug about sixty pieces out of him when he finally got back to San Diego and even then they didn't have it all. One of his forefingers was hanging by a thread when he regained consciousness in the water and he could feel a piece of shrapnel in his scalp. Still the Japs weren't satisfied, for when a searchlight picked him up as he floated in his tattered life jacket they opened up on him with a machine gun. Fortunately they hit him no more.

With Guadalcanal about seven miles away, afraid to call for help lest he betray his presence to the Japs, Schindler put in several hellish hours before he managed to attract the attention of other survivors on a life raft and was hauled aboard. Once during the depths of his despair in the night, he tried to drown himself but the sea water merely made him sick.

Finally a plane located them huddled on the raft and sent rescuers to them. Aboard a transport and awaiting medical attention, Schindler delightedly discovered that the "doc" was the one from the *Little* who also had been saved. He not only dressed Schindler's wounds but rigged a splint for his shattered finger out of a coat hanger and now "it's just about as good as new."

## CHAPTER SIX

### BLUIE WEST ONE

EARLY in the war the Army Air Forces realized the need for adequate, accurate weather reports from Greenland. Where the Germans wanted the information to enable them to plan air raids on Britain well in advance, the AAF wanted it in connection with prospective ferrying of bombers to Britain.

The story of how the Air Forces set about getting the data is one which evokes many a chuckle in the wardrooms of Coast Guard ships.

With great secrecy, so the story goes, the AAF assembled a group of technicians in Washington one day and, behind carefully guarded doors, told them they had been chosen for an all-important mission but one which would impose great physical strain upon them. They were to go to Greenland to man lonely weather-reporting stations there.

In due course they embarked for Greenland with everything about their mission still very hush-hush and in due course they arrived at the first port of call on their itinerary. As they were moving into the harbor they got the surprise of their lives, for rising into the Arctic air was an observation balloon with a barograph attached—exactly the same

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equipment they had come hundreds of miles to put into operation!

Someone in Washington had forgotten that, months before, the Coast Guard had ferried Army instructors around to most of the Danish hamlets on the coast of Greenland for the purpose of instructing the local radio operators in the collection of the desired meteorological data.

The Coast Guard soon had reason to be glad, however, that the expedition of weather observers had arrived when it did, for the men proved of immense aid in effecting the rescue of Army fliers from the treacherous Greenland icecap—some of the most dramatic rescues which history has to offer.

Here, again, is an example of the Coast Guard's readiness and ability to meet a wartime emergency. When the need arose, even in faraway Greenland, the Coast Guard lived up to its motto.

Credit for the preparedness in that theatre, incidentally, is due in large measure to one man about whom the public knows little or nothing—Rear Admiral Ed. H. (Iceberg) Smith, first commander of the Greenland Patrol.

Long before war came to America, Smith had been convinced of the strategic importance of Greenland to the United States and especially of the vulnerability to attack of the northeast coast of Greenland. He had made a close study of the subject on two Arctic cruises of the *Northland* prior to the one on which the Nazi radio station was seized and

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destroyed. Then he prepared a detailed report of his findings and it was submitted to the Navy Department.

"Okay," said the Navy, in effect. "The job is yours. Do something about it."

In short order thereafter, "something" was done. Smith was placed in command of the operation, later attaining the rank of Rear Admiral, and three ships were assigned to him for the Greenland Patrol. Today he has some forty craft of all types in his force, some Coast Guard and some Navy. He is the only Coast Guard admiral afloat and the only officer of that service commanding an area.

Smith took his original three vessels, the *Northland*, the *North Star* and Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd's old polar ship, the *Bear*, and headed north. He established headquarters on the west coast of Greenland at a location known in the service as "Bluie West One."

Operating in the hemisphere's northernmost waters was nothing new to the Coast Guard. For years it had been given the job of maintaining the Ice Patrol in the North Atlantic, watching and reporting the location and course of icebergs which would be a menace to shipping. In Alaskan waters it had run the Bering Sea Patrol, which among other things had the responsibility of dealing with Japanese poachers in the salmon and seal preserves.

Consequently, when the Navy wanted a job done in the Greenland area, it was only natural that the Coast Guard should be called upon to do it.



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However none of its former experiences in the Arctic compared in scope, importance or difficulty with what it was up against this time. In the first place it never had operated on a year-round basis in the Greenland area. Always in the past it had followed the local custom of "getting the hell out of there" by the end of September so as not to get caught in the ice. Now it not only had to stay in there for the duration, but it had to operate a sizable shore establishment, which included aviation facilities, and engage in a wide variety of unfamiliar activities such as rescue expeditions on the icecap.

The job put the courage and endurance of both officers and men to the severest tests at times, for they had to operate in weather conditions which they maintain cannot be matched anywhere in the world. Hundred-mile-an-hour gales were not uncommon. One young lieutenant who had command of a small patrol craft told of being in a blow in the Hudson Bay area during which the force of the wind ashore reached 178 miles an hour.

"And it was dying down by the time it reached shore," he insisted.

Instead of getting back to their main base at least every three months, the cutter's crews sometimes were away as much as ten months at a time.

One day, while making routine visits to some of the small hamlets or hunting establishments along the coast, the *Northland* got word that three Canadian fliers were down on the icecap at a point well up on the west coast of the

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island. She at once got under way for the location named in the hope of taking the victims aboard.

Lieutenant Skinner, the lad who participated in the seizure of the Nazi's radio station, was now the cutter's navigator. In peacetime his toughest navigation problem doubtless was in finding his way around the catacomblike basement of the National Capitol. Consequently he was more than a little jittery at the prospect of taking the ship into those comparatively unknown waters.

To make matters as bad as possible, the weather closed in and for four days Carl couldn't get a shot at either the sun or the stars with his sextant, and of course there were no radio navigation aids for him to fall back on. His only course was the nautical process of "standing on and off"—running in to where the shore line was believed to be, taking soundings at frequent intervals and hoping for a sight of the coast which might give them a bearing. They were looking for the entrance to an unnamed bay, and although Skinner was privately scared stiff that his position by dead reckoning was wrong, unless he was formally relieved of his job and that fact noted in the ship's log, his word was law as to the course. Occasionally peaks or headlands would loom up through the fog and usually precipitated an argument on the bridge as to their identities.

No one knew for sure, though, and the nervous strain was great.

As it was, on the fourth day they managed to hit the right

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spot—a large and almost landlocked inlet which they named Pollard Bay in honor of the cutter's captain.

There was no sign of the Canadian aviators, however, and the rescue party had the distressing feeling of being too late. They scanned the shore line on either side of the glacier which filled one end of the bay but to no avail. The fliers either had perished or left on foot in an effort to reach some settlement overland, it appeared.

As the cutter was about to leave, however, a lookout shouted:

“Light on the glacier!”

Binoculars were trained on the river of ice and, sure enough, right at its edge, where huge sections were likely to break off and plunge into the water at any moment, a small fire burned. Three figures were gesticulating wildly beside it. The fliers had been found.

Later it was learned that when they failed by every other means at their command to attract the attention of those on the ship, the desperate airmen had stripped off their parkas, without which they could not hope to survive long, and made a bonfire of them!

By means of a blinker signal, which the plane's radioman could read, the cutter directed the trio to make their way to the shore line where a boat picked them up and rushed them to the warmth and security of the ship. They had been down on the icecap for eight weeks and were suffering from frozen hands and feet.

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Typical of the youngsters who are carrying on the air war against the enemies of democracy, the fliers included a schoolteacher, a meat salesman and a lad who had been in school when he answered his country's call. They didn't lose any of their hands or feet as a result of the frostbite, fortunately, but they'll never again be able to stand much cold because the tissues have lost their resistance to it.

Use of the Greenland route for ferrying planes to Europe has been one of the principal reasons, obviously, for the maintenance of the Coast Guard's patrol up there. Not merely for the dramatic business of rescuing fliers forced down, but for the mundane but no less important task of keeping the air bases and collateral establishments supplied. This meant convoy duty of the most difficult nature, in which the deadly ice pack and savage, unpredictable storms were even greater menaces than the U-boats.

They had their troubles with the underseas raiders, nevertheless, as the latter tried to interfere with the shipments of critical cryolite from the mines near Ivigtut.

One day, however, one of the subs made a sad mistake. It began trailing the *Northland* while the latter was on a routine observation detail. The cutter had been plying a fixed course for several hours and the U-boat apparently believed it was headed up the coast for a rendezvous with some possibly important shipping, so it tagged along.

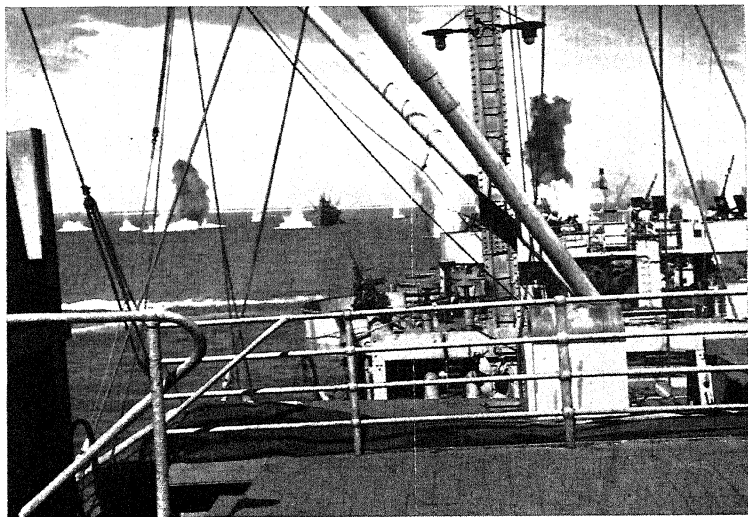
At the end of the run, though, the cutter had completed its observations and reversed its course, intending to head



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### WAR CLOUDS OFF SICILY

U. S. Coast Guard gunners tensely study the lowering skies for enemy planes.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### FROM THE DECK OF A COAST GUARD-MANNED TRANSPORT

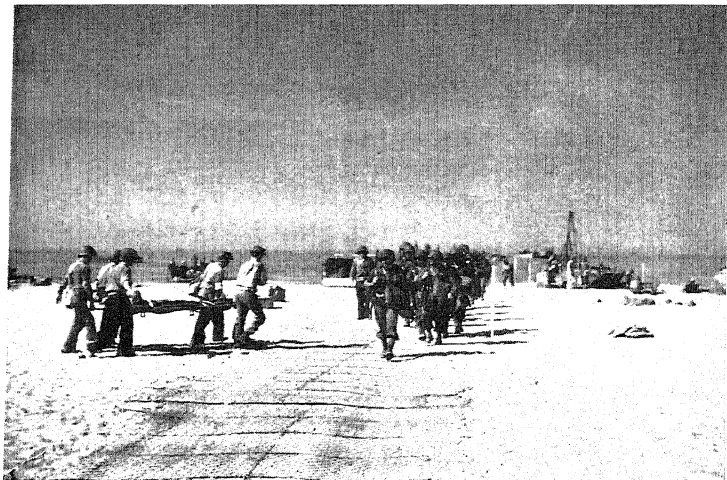
The bomb-pocked waters off Sicily during the invasion.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### UNDERNEATH DROPPING BOMBS

U. S. Coast Guardsmen and Navy beach battalion men are shown hugging the shaking beach at Paestum, Italy, as a Nazi bomber unloads on them.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### MOVING UP AT SALERNO

U. S. troops marching up the Salerno shore. Coast Guard-manned landing craft that brought them ashore are visible in the background.

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back to its base. Almost immediately the sound gear detected the presence of the apparently unsuspecting submarine which had been following outside the sound range. It was promptly the target for a terrific depth-charge attack. At full speed, which was scarcely great enough to take it out of range of the explosions of its own ash cans, the *Northland* laid several patterns of the sub-busters over the area, and while they didn't bring back the captain's pants as proof of the sub's destruction, the *Northland's* officers and men who were aboard at the time have been authorized to wear on their campaign ribbons the insignia of a successful attack on a U-boat.

It was in the rescue of stranded airmen, however, that the men of the Greenland Patrol most closely approximated the "mercy sailors" of the peacetime Coast Guard.

Early in the summer of 1942 a formation of Lightning P-38 fighter planes, equipped with belly tanks, were being flown to Britain across the Greenland icecap. Because a fighter-plane pilot has neither the room nor the equipment to work out long-distance navigation problems while in flight, the P-38's were being led along the course by an Army bomber. It was strictly a case of follow the leader, so when the bomber was forced down on the icecap, the fighters had no option but to follow suit. They could not find their own way either to Britain or back to any American base.

In all, there were twenty-six men down on the ice. They were located by searching planes and food and clothing

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were dropped to them. There was only one way for them to get out, however, and that was by a long, hazardous trek over the crevasse-filled icecap. They needed guides and dog teams, if possible, and it was up to the Coast Guard to get them there.

Iceberg Smith gave the necessary orders and a converted Chesapeake fishing craft set out from Iceland with the only available dog team and a couple of Army Air Force men. The *Northland* picked up some more of the Air Force weather-reporting group and followed.

Much of the epic struggle of those stranded fliers against the Arctic already has been told, but when they finally set out for the cutter they were loaded down with personal gear. And, of course, they lugged their secret bombsights, the famous "Blue Ox," each in its little zippered bags. As they trudged wearily over the glacier's white but treacherous surface, they began jettisoning their belongings—anything that added weight, like pistols, binoculars, etc. By the time they reached the coast they had little but the clothing they stood in—and their bombsights.

"We got no loot out of them at all," recalled a Coast Guardsman from the *Northland*. "They were the healthiest-looking bunch of disaster victims I have ever seen, though. You see, the sun shone for almost twenty-four hours a day at that time and they all had acquired beautiful coats of tan."

Naturally, such colorful episodes are few and far between in the life of the Greenland Patrol. Monotony is the usual



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fare. However, when there were no rescues to perform, the men devised a variety of ways to entertain themselves. Occasionally, for example, they would go ashore and play baseball. In one such game, played well above the Arctic Circle, the *Northland's* engineers beat the deck force, nine to eight.

During ice-breaking operations, devotees of winter sports used to leave the ships and go skiing.

"When you're ice-breaking," one officer explained, "about all you need is an ensign on the bridge and an engine-room force. Everybody else can go below or ashore."

Captain von Paulsen, who usually alternated with Admiral Smith as the Patrol's S.O.P.A.—senior officer present afloat—spent much of his spare time excavating in old Eskimo graveyards. There have been no Eskimos in that part of Greenland for a couple of hundred years, so he had no fear of offending any bereaved relatives.

A subordinate estimated that von Paulsen had dug around in as many as 200 ancient Eskimo graveyards. His cabin usually was well stocked with polished skulls and guests frequently were startled as they sat down to the captain's table by the sight of a candle flickering in the grinning skull of some long-dead Eskimo.

Von Paulsen, it may be seen, is one of the Coast Guard's most colorful characters who wins the admiration of his men through sheer leadership. A typical example of how he operates was furnished one day when a motor surfboat went

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aground on a sand bar. Von Paulsen was the first man over the side in the waist-deep, icy water to lighten the boat and get her back into deep water. Needless to say, none of the men had to be ordered to imitate him.

Earlier in his career, von Paulsen was an aviator and there's a story about him when he commanded the Coast Guard air station at Miami which certainly merits retelling.

Word reached him one day that a child had gone adrift in a rowboat and apparently had been swept out to sea. Von Paulsen got into a plane and searched the area until he located the rowboat and its terrified occupant. The wind had increased so, however, that the curling, white-capped seas were a positive danger to the youngster. The rowboat might capsize at any moment, so there was no time to wait for surface craft to come up. The water was too rough for von Paulsen's seaplane to land and take off, so there was only one other course. He put the plane down in a crash landing, jumped clear and swam to the rowboat.

Once aboard, he found there were no oars, so he ripped a seat from the thwarts and used it to paddle ashore!

Von Paulsen doesn't stand on much ceremony in the Arctic. His uniform often consists of unpressed slacks and a sweater or windbreaker, a battered cap and a pair of wooden-soled Danish shoes which he got from the *Busko*. On occasions, this completely "non-reg" attire has brought confusion to younger and junior Navy officers who mistook him for a rather untidy member of the *Northland's* crew.

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Take the case of the skipper of a Navy tanker from which the cutter was getting fuel one day. Von Paulsen was lounging around the deck watching the fueling operation but, as is his custom, not interfering with his officers. The captain of the tanker, a commander, may have noticed the oddly dressed character, and he may not. At any rate he sent word a little later that he would like to have the cutter's captain make a formal call.

"Oh, he would, would he?" said von Paulsen with heavy sarcasm. Actually, according to naval etiquette, it was the tanker captain's place to make a courtesy call on the senior officer.

"Tell him that the cutter's captain will be happy to accept," von Paulsen directed. Then he had his cabin boy break out his best uniform—the one with the newest and shiniest four gold stripes on the sleeves.

Just what occurred when he walked into the cabin of the tanker's three-striped skipper is not recorded but the cutter's wardroom made due note of the fact that later in the day the tanker captain sent over a big basket of fresh fruit for the cutter's junior officers and invited all hands to attend the movies that night aboard the tanker.

Like all good commanders, von Paulsen had a faculty for knowing what was going on all over his ship without getting the reputation of a snooper. He had a habit of turning up at the most unexpected times and places, though, and the men knew they couldn't put anything over on him.

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One day a loquacious petty officer was literally peeling paint off the bulkheads with his profanity, inspired by some job his working party had been given to do. In the midst of his outburst, the captain's quiet voice floated down from the bridge:

"That's not very good cursing, young man, even if cursing were permitted in a working party."

Cutters on the Greenland Patrol often have strange experiences which have nothing to do with the war. One time, for example, the *Northland* was sent to take supplies in to the little Eskimo village of Scoresby Sound, a fjord which runs some 120 miles in from the sea and where you can still have 900 fathoms of water under your keel at its head. No ship had been able to get in for a long time and the natives were in grave danger of starvation if they had to go through another winter without fresh supplies.

An offshore wind was blowing at the time the *Northland* reached the point where it would enter the Sound and the officers knew that the ice pack would be open sufficiently to permit their passage. As long as the wind held, they would be all right. Otherwise they might be in danger of having the ice close in behind them and seal them there for the winter.

And, sure enough, just about the time they reached the village, the wind shifted! They estimated they had a maximum of twenty-four hours in which to unload the supplies, which included a deckload of about sixty tons of coal.

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The old mayor of the village, Hendrik Hoegh, a dignified and intelligent Greenlander, told the Coast Guardsmen that for the preceding two months he had daily climbed the 2,000-foot mountain behind the village to watch for a ship. He knew, he said, that his people were doomed if outside aid did not come.

When the *Northland* tied up and was ready to unload, all the young women of the village, from age eight to eighteen, came down to help. But the male natives merely looked on. Realizing the need for speed, the Coast Guard officer in charge of the unloading was incensed at this lack of co-operation from the village menfolk. Finally he picked up a sack and flung it across the shoulders of one of them and ordered him to get going. The native indignantly hurled the sack to the ground and strode off to complain to the mayor.

A solemn conference of the natives ensued and finally Mayor Hoegh came down to the ship. Very apologetically he conceded that the Coast Guardsmen were right. After all, they were working at the unloading and they were doing it for his people, not for themselves. But, unfortunately, it was the tradition of his village and his people generally that the women did all the work. The men were hunters and warriors only.

However, as a special concession in view of the emergency, his men had agreed to help.

And they did, but what the amazed Coast Guardsmen

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saw next was the husky native men solemnly lifting the sacks and packages and placing them securely on the shoulders or backs of the little girls, who then carried them up the hill to the village!

One day in the spring of 1943 the cutter *Escanaba* was lying in a Greenland harbor waiting to escort a convoy, including a large transport, back to the United States. Below decks some of the crew were listening to the Berlin radio—the music was better than on any of the other stations they could get.

Suddenly the men were startled to hear the name of the transport in their convoy mentioned.

It was the infamous Lord Haw-Haw speaking, and he described the ship, told what she had been doing in the preceding months, where she was at the moment and declared “she will not reach the United States!”

Of course such talk was regarded more as propaganda than anything else, but, nevertheless, the commander of the escort group alerted all his ships, put their crews on “six hours on and six off” watches with the sound gear operating, while still in port. His precaution was sound because an Army transport plane on the way in to a landing reported spotting a sub a short distance outside the anchorage.

“We had trouble with the U-boats for about eighteen hours solid after we got under way,” a crew member said. “Nobody got any sleep in that time, but at least we had the satisfaction of knowing that the subs could not get at the

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transport to make Lord Haw-Haw's prediction come true."

About the end of the second day out, the *Escanaba's* skipper told his crew that those not on watch could stay in their bunks to make up for lost sleep, relieving them of the necessity of turning to for scrubbing decks and similar off-watch chores. They didn't even have to get up for chow unless they chose.

About 5:00 A.M. of the third day out, therefore, only a handful of the officers and men were on duty. A tall, dark-haired seaman, second, who looks startlingly like Victor Mature had the wheel. He was Raymond O'Malley.

"The sound gear picked up a contact that sounded a little like machine-gun fire," O'Malley said. "It was bright daylight then, because of the Arctic sun's position above the horizon twenty-four hours a day at that time of the year, but nobody reported anything out of the ordinary—nothing like torpedo wakes or anything like that."

As soon as the contact was picked up, however, the skipper and the "exec" who were sleeping in the small emergency cabin aft of the wheel house, were roused and immediately came on the bridge, pulling on life jackets as they ran. The OD (Officer of the Deck) and the others had their heads stuck out the battle ports, trying to see if they could spot anything that would account for the contact.

In a matter of seconds there was a terrific explosion.

"The next thing I knew," recalled O'Malley, "the exec was dead and the OD's face was covered with blood.

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"I still had the wheel. It was my job to stay right on the course until the OD gave me instructions which way to swing the ship. When he spoke, however, it was to order me to get out on the wing of the bridge and man one of the guns.

"I just had time to reach for my life jacket and pull it on when the water hit me. The ship went down in less than twenty seconds. The torpedo had hit her just abaft amidships and broken her in half.

"I was on the bridge wing when the water hit me but I had time to see the stick [mast] falling before I went under. I went down a second time with the ship, but was blown to the surface by the underwater explosion of her boilers.

"The water didn't feel cold although I learned afterward that it was logged at thirty-three degrees.

"In the water around me I saw the skipper and a couple of other enlisted men. The skipper advised us to swim for a strongback [a wooden boom used to lash the ship's lifeboats to for support] and to stick together.

"I got to the strongback but my hands already had begun to freeze so that I couldn't move the fingers. I just was able to throw a clove hitch around one wrist and lash myself to the strongback when I passed out."

It was an hour and three minutes after the explosion that O'Malley and one other seaman, Melvin A. Baldwin, Boatswain's Mate, second, were hauled aboard a rescue vessel, a seagoing tug which had been in the convoy. Both men were



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unconscious for several hours after their rescue and medical officers told them that another five minutes in the icy water would have finished them.

Baldwin had been asleep in his bunk when the torpedo hit. To this day he doesn't know how he managed to get out of the forecastle although, with a grin, he concedes that there wasn't anyone ahead of him on the ladder. Nevertheless, his escape is one of those inexplicable mysteries of the sea, for the *Escanaba* had disappeared from view even before those on the other ships in the convoy had heard the noise of the torpedo's explosion.

O'Malley says the only reason that Baldwin is alive is that his arm froze to the strongback, preventing him from sinking into the sea when he lost consciousness.

Following the *Escanaba's* loss, the Navy revealed that she had been one of the two Coast Guard cutters which rescued some 230 passengers and crew of a transport torpedoed and sunk in the North Atlantic the preceding winter. The *Escanaba's* skipper, Lieutenant Commander Carl Uno Peterson, was posthumously awarded the Legion of Merit by Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll, Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, for his part in the rescue. Five other officers and men received either the Navy and Marine Corps medal or letters of commendation.

For more than eight hours in absolute darkness and in constant danger of submarine attack, the *Escanaba* kept at the rescue operation. During that time three men selected

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to serve as "retrievers," dressed in rubber suits and with lines about their shoulders, swam long distances from the cutter's side to bring back men on rafts or in the icy water who were unable to help themselves. They spent about four hours in the water, saving many men who otherwise would have perished.

One survivor fell from a crowded boat before he could be lifted aboard the cutter. His body was covered with oil, making it impossible for the others in the boat to haul him back. Ensign Richard A. Arrighi, one of the retrievers, saw what was wrong and soon rescued the man by swimming between the boat and the cutter although he was in constant peril of being crushed against the cutter's hull by the heavy sea.

Constant maneuvering of the cutter was necessary during the rescue operations subjecting the men in the water to an added hazard—the danger of being caught by the ship's propeller. Two enlisted men, Arrighi's fellow retrievers, saved many of the floating survivors from being caught in the propeller's suction. One of them swam right in under the ship's counter to retrieve a raft loaded with survivors.

One of the petty officers aboard the ship which rescued O'Malley and Baldwin was Victor Mature, the movie star, who so frequently portrays the part of a conceited young man.

When he showed up aboard a cutter assigned to the Greenland Patrol, he was wearing the insignia of a boatswain's

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mate, first class. Naturally, he was in for a rawhiding from many of the old-timers who lost no opportunity to needle him about the fact that they had won their stripes "the hard way."

Scuttlebutt has it that Mature took the ribbing in good part for a time but finally it began to get under his skin. One day in port he announced that he was going up on the dock and any so-and-so who had anything more to say about him or the way he got his rating could come up and say it to him then, or else button up. But, he'd better come up fighting!

Some sources say he had to slap a couple of the lads around a bit before he finally was accepted on other merits than those of an actor.

He was only in the service a short time when quite a legend was being built up around him. Take the time he was ordered to Washington, for example, to participate in a war-bond selling drive.

When he arrived at the airport an officer was there to meet him. Mature got off the plane and the officer noticed that he was bareheaded.

"Where's your hat?" the officer asked. "You can't go around Washington without a hat."

"You know what, Jack?" inquired Mature, calling the officer by his first name. "I can't keep a hat to save my soul. The dames keep snatching them wherever I go. I've lost thirty-seven hats that way!"

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"I don't care how you lost them," the officer said. "Get a hat—but quick."

"Now look," protested Mature. "I've been traveling without one for the last six or eight hours with Russ and he hasn't objected yet, so why should you?"

The officer's jaw dropped, for when he looked in the direction of Mature's gesture toward "Russ," he discovered that it was none other than Vice Admiral Russell Randolph Waesche, commandant of the Coast Guard, to whom Mature referred.

As stated earlier, one of the missions of the Greenland Patrol was to protect the ships carrying ore from the cryolite mine near Ivigtut, up on the West Coast of Greenland. As a matter of fact, the United States took an intense and unusual interest in the security not only of the ore shipments but of the mine itself well in advance of the establishment of the patrol.

The mine is operated by the Pennsylvania Salt Company of Philadelphia, but it was not the American capital in the mine that inspired the government's solicitude. It was the fact that the Ivigtut mine was the principal source of cryolite and, at that time, cryolite was vitally essential to the production of aluminum, being used in a molten bath to extract aluminum from bauxite.

In those days, when the expansion of the aircraft industry was just getting under way and grave doubts existed as to

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whether there would be sufficient aluminum to meet the need, the Germans could have dealt a damaging if not crippling blow by interrupting or eliminating the production of that one mine. Since then, fortunately, the aluminum industry is not so dependent upon cryolite. New processes have been found and, like the Germans, we have developed synthetic substitutes for cryolite.

However, in 1939-1940 one cryolite ship was regarded as worth "ten tankers" by many interested persons and they lost no time in impressing that fact upon the government.

One day, after the Greenland Patrol had been set up, a young Coast Guard officer whose ship called at Ivigtut got a somewhat startling insight into just how well the government had been impressed. He was taken up to the cryolite mine and, while being shown around the premises, noticed that a number of steps had been taken to defend the mine against attack.

For one thing, there was an antiaircraft gun near by which had a familiar look.

"Isn't that an American gun?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," spoke up a competent-looking individual, his perfect English causing the Coast Guard officer some surprise. "It's a Coast Guard gun. I used to be in the Coast Guard, sir, until I came up here!"

It was quite true. The cutter *Campbell* had delivered the gun to Ivigtut sometime previously and, following the same procedure that was used by the Army and Navy to provide

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competent airmen for Chennault's Flying Tigers in China, the Coast Guard had permitted a number of its most discreet noncommissioned gunnery officers to resign from the service and sign on—at substantial boosts in pay—as members of the gun crew to protect the cryolite mine.

Since then, of course, the Army has taken over the defense of Greenland and that arrangement has been terminated.

When the Greenland Patrol was established, one of the first things Admiral Smith and his men had to do was to begin hydrographic surveys of the area, for the available American maps and charts were of little value. The Danish government had just completed a fine hydrographic survey of Greenland before the Nazis occupied Denmark, but unfortunately all the data had been sent to Copenhagen and fell into the hands of the Germans. So there was no question but that when the Germans began laying plans for location of weather stations and other facilities in Greenland, they had better charts to work from than probably will be available to the Coast Guard for some time to come.

To overcome this lack of pilotage data, Admiral Smith assigned several of his ships exclusively to hydrographic survey work. One of them was the famous Arctic exploration vessel, the *Bowdoin*, which is owned by Commander Donald B. MacMillan. For a time MacMillan skippered the *Bowdoin* in her Greenland Patrol duties for it was only on those terms that he agreed to turn her over to the Coast Guard.

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In gathering up ships for his little fleet, Smith acquired a number of erstwhile steam fishing trawlers and their skippers. The latter weren't so hot on paper work and naval regulations, and inspecting officers frequently found the paper work pretty badly fouled up when they came aboard. But when there was dirty duty to be performed, when seamanship was the prime requisite, Admiral Smith knew he could always count on the trawlers and their skippers to come through.

There was a tragic illustration of that in December of 1942. The pack ice had closed in on the northeast coast of Greenland, making operations afloat there impossible. Three of the ships in the patrol—two wooden-hulled former trawlers and a steel-hulled Navy tug—had been in the area for many months and it was decided to send them back to the States. By routing them through the Strait of Belle Isle between Newfoundland and Labrador, it was just possible that the ships would be able to get back home by Christmas.

They got under way together, but since the wooden ships were faster than the steel one, the latter soon was left behind. The weather began to get bad and up in that part of the world, where the Gulf Stream and the Labrador current virtually collide, icing conditions are particularly bad in the winter months. Moisture forms on the superstructure of the ships and quickly freezes. Enough of the resultant ice topsides can be fatal to almost any ship, so the wise skipper takes every precaution to prevent that happening.

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Commanding one of the wooden ex-trawlers was an old-time fisherman. He had been sailing off the Grand Banks for years, so he knew the score. Accordingly, when the ice began to form on his top hamper, he took direct action. Rousing out the entire crew, he kept every man-jack chopping ice for thirty-six hours almost without a letup. It was what the boys in the Fleet call rugged duty and undoubtedly some of those lads got so tired they wished the ship would founder and get it finished. Somehow they managed to carry on and their ship made port—although not for Christmas.

The second ship was the *Natsek* and as we know, she never was heard from again. Her skipper was Tom LaFarge, one of America's foremost mural painters, but his seagoing experience was rather limited. Veteran Coast Guardsmen believe that he didn't fully realize the danger which the accumulating ice constituted and the ship simply turned turtle before the crew could even send out a distress signal.

Incidentally, when the *Natsek* vanished she took with her some forty completed paintings depicting the activities of the Coast Guard in Greenland. They were the work of a couple of New Englanders who had been painters in civilian life and struck up an acquaintanceship in boot camp. They are Seaman Ben Wolf of Cape Cod and Coxswain Norman Thomas of Portland, Maine.

They separated when they left boot camp but met again in Greenland. Naturally impressed by the primitive beauty



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of their surroundings, the pair worked in their spare time on many paintings of the things they saw—and when they had about forty finished, they seized the opportunity to send them back to the United States aboard the *Natsek!*

Because of the impossibility of patrolling the northeast coast of Greenland during the months from September to April in surface ships, Admiral Smith was forced to find a substitute means of knowing what was going on in the vast expanse of coast line that stretches up beyond Scoresby Sound. A regular plane patrol is not possible because of the uncertainty of the weather and yet there were hundreds of miles of coast—the section closest to Spitzbergen and Norway incidentally—where the Germans might make surprise landings by plane. So Smith hit upon the idea of a sled patrol to be conducted by Danish hunters or Norwegians hired by the Danish authorities in Greenland. These hunters are usually the only humans north of Scoresby Sound, for the Eskimos have not inhabited that part of the island for many years. When the Greenland Patrol was established there were only twenty-eight persons in that entire area and not all of them were allowed to remain. Any Norwegian who was not in the employ of the Danes was evacuated, whether he wanted to leave or not, because it was feared he might be coerced by invading Germans, possibly through fear of reprisals against his relatives in Norway, into co-operating in the Nazis' schemes for getting weather data out of Greenland.

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The sled patrol worked all right for a time. The trappers, who usually operated in pairs, sent in reports occasionally from Danish weather-reporting stations. To keep in touch with one another in the event of a party getting lost, they followed a custom of leaving notes in each of the huts at which they stopped along their trap lines, telling where they were headed. As it developed this was a tactical error. One day the reports ceased coming in from the sled patrol. No one knew what had happened and there wasn't much that could be done about it, due to the difficulty of landing planes on the ice.

The mystery finally was solved when one of the Danes got back to a settlement on the southern coast. With him, as a prisoner, he had a German soldier!

It was the commander of a Nazi detachment of about eighteen men who had landed surreptitiously on an island far up on the northeast coast of Greenland and had succeeded in capturing the entire sled patrol, one group at a time. They surprised one outfit and then, backtracking along the traplines and reading the notes the trappers left for each other, the Germans were able to nab the whole crowd—about fifteen in all.

Except for one of the trappers, Eli Knudsen, who tried to resist and was shot in his tracks, none of the sled patrolmen was seriously mistreated. In fact, once the Germans had destroyed their radio equipment, they turned the Danes loose.

The leader of the German Greenland Expedition, as the

## BLUIE WEST ONE

Nazi outfit was known, was overpowered by the Dane when they went on an exploration trip along the barren northeast coast and although it entailed a forty-day sled trip across one of the most forbidding bits of terrain in the world, the Nazi was finally delivered into U. S. custody. A Navy plane was flown over from Iceland and the German officer taken there for interrogation.

In May of 1943, U. S. Army Air Force planes commanded by Colonel Bernt Balchen bombed and strafed the base which the Germans had set up on their remote little island and as soon as ice conditions permitted, Admiral Smith sent the ever-ready cutters *Northland* and *North Star* in to complete the destruction of the base and capture any Germans still there.

Captain von Paulsen commanded the cutter force and a detachment of Army ground troops who went along. The *North Star*, seemingly in a repetition of the bad luck which deprived its crew of the honor of capturing the *Busko* in the first brush with the Nazis in Greenland, became jammed for more than a month in the unusually heavy pack ice. The *Northland* found several favorable leads and soon was within striking distance of the base. Von Paulsen went ashore personally to command the attack which involved a dash across an open stretch of ice-covered but fairly level terrain in order to come upon the enemy base from the rear. It was hidden from the view of the attackers by a range of hills.

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No elaborate strategy was required, however, for all but one of the Germans had disappeared. They either had been killed in the aerial attack or been evacuated subsequently by plane.

Von Paulsen and his men found plenty of evidence of the accuracy of Balchen's attack. All the main buildings except a small generator shack had been destroyed as well as the small supply ship which had been anchored in the harbor. From the solid construction of the damaged structures, it was evident that the Germans had hoped to make a permanent affair of the base. It included a radio station, power house, emergency generator and radio transmitter separately located, defensive machine-gun emplacements and food caches. The supply ship had had telephone communication with all the principal shore points.

Although there were no Germans at the base when the Americans arrived, one turned up there a short time later. He was a technician who had been back at the trappers' hut where Knudsen had been killed but had lost his sled and dogs through the ice and therefore could not get back to the base until the ice went out and he could row back in a small skiff.

Thus, for the third time, the Coast Guard figured prominently in preventing the Germans from establishing themselves on this continent. The fact that two of those attempts had been made by radio-equipped forces in Greenland indicates the importance which the Nazis attach to the pro-

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curement of weather data from that area and, conversely, the important contribution the Coast Guard is making by denying them access to it.

Because of the size of that vast and grossly misnamed country, Coast Guardsmen on duty in Greenland know that the defense of the territory is neither their job nor that of the Army units which followed them there. The real task of both is to see to it that the system of air bases by which combat planes are ferried to Britain are kept operating and supplied.

"When we see those big bombers go over, even though most of the four-engined jobs don't have to stop any more, we know that our job is being done," said one Coast Guardsman. "Then the long, grueling hours we put in up in that Godforsaken territory begin to have some meaning."

In some cases, as we have seen, the "meaning" of those bomber flights to the Coast Guard was a lot of difficult rescue work when the planes were forced down on the icecap. On the whole, although we may have to wait until the end of the war for the details, the record on ferrying planes over the northern great circle course has been exceptionally good.

In the early days of the war, when the range of fighter planes was shorter than it is today, the need for a system of bases between the production centers and Iceland, the last land on the northern great-circle route to Britain, was clearly recognized. Even before the United States got into the conflict, as a matter of fact, a couple of survey expeditions were

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sent to the Canadian Arctic and combed the territory pretty thoroughly for air base sites. President Roosevelt's son, Elliott, was along on one of the expeditions and some Canadians were a little resentful of that fact. They felt that it was a little too obvious a form of pressure to get decisions on base sites and related matters without going through the customary ritual of negotiation.

Doubtless those disturbed Canadians were reading things into the picture that actually did not exist. At any rate, all sign of ruffled feelings long since has disappeared, aided possibly by some assurance that Canada will fall heir to the bases when the war is over.

A number of bases were built in the Canadian Arctic, starting at Churchill, the Canadian railhead on Hudson Bay. They were within easy fighter-plane range of one another.

With one or two exceptions, the bases have had little or no use in connection with the plane flights to Britain. The bombers didn't need them and possibly a decision to let the British aircraft industry concentrate on the production of fighters made it unnecessary to fly those made in the United States across the ocean.

Nevertheless, the decision to build the bases in the Canadian Arctic added to the burdens of the Greenland Patrol for it was up to Admiral Smith's men to get the ships carrying the construction men and materials into the base sites and, once the bases were built, to maintain the flow of food-

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stuffs and other supplies to their garrisons and plane ground crews.

As in the case of Greenland, operation of ships in the Hudson Bay area and its approaches was difficult because of the lack of adequate charts and the scarcity of men familiar with those waters. The Hudson's Bay Company had a steamer which used to make trips in to its trading posts and the Canadian Government steamer *Nascopie* also operated there. The crews of those vessels seldom quit, it seems, so that the pool of men who knew the waters up there never got very large.

Consequently, the Coast Guard had to go it alone again. They more or less felt their way in to the various base sites, piloting the merchant ships along with them. Little by little they got some aids to navigation in place. These consisted chiefly of shore markers and a few Coast Guard-manned light-houses, because like the fjords of Greenland, the water in the Canadian Arctic is usually too deep in which to anchor buoys—or ships, for that matter.

In addition to escorting the supply ships in to the Hudson Bay bases, a major part of the Coast Guard's duty there was to use its ships as radio stations for the Army outfits building the bases until such time as the latter could get their own communications system in operation. Even after that time, the Coast Guard had to assign picket boats and their crews to each base for use as plane rescue craft or crash boats, as they are known, and to handle the multifarious details con-

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nected with the shipping operations involved. This duty, like the rest of the work of the Greenland Patrol, devolved upon the Coast Guard under a joint Army-Navy agreement entered into when the operations in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic were decided upon. That agreement stipulated that the Coast Guard would provide the ships and men that would be needed.

Coast Guardsmen are full of wisecracks as to why the Navy prefers to give those northern "plums" to the smaller, though older, service but the fact is that the Coast Guard was admirably fitted to handle the work. As a result of its years of experience in running the International Ice Patrol and the Bering Sea Patrol, the Coast Guard had men who knew the score so far as operating in the Arctic was concerned and who could provide at least the nucleus of the force that ultimately was found necessary. Furthermore, it had at least some ships which were built or reinforced for operating in ice.

Soon after the Coast Guard began operating in the Greenland area, an Icelandic trawler manned mostly by Britishers came in to Bluie East One, the base on the southeast coast of Greenland.

"Had you heard the *Bismarck* is loose up around here somewhere?" one of the Englishmen inquired conversationally.

It was true. The powerful, 35,000-ton German battleship had slipped out of her Norwegian hideout and accompanied



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by a strong escorting force was bent on raiding Allied transatlantic convoys. A particular target for her doubtless was the already heavy volume of shipping to Murmansk.

It's an old story now of how the *Bismarck* sank the mighty British battle cruiser *Hood* with almost her first salvo, sending a chill of horror through the democratic nations by this added demonstration of Nazi invincibility. What is not so well known is a Coast Guard sidelight on the dramatic and successful effort made by the British Royal Navy to avenge the *Hood*.

What happened was that about the same time word of the *Bismarck's* presence in the area reached Blue East One, a call came for the Coast Guard to look for survivors from eight ships reported to have been sunk en route to Murmansk. Three cutters responded, including the 240-foot *Modoc*.

The *Modoc* didn't find any survivors—although one of the other cutters made a brilliant rescue—but she found something else not at all to her liking. First of all, a flight of six British torpedo planes appeared in the sky one morning. They were the old, slow Fairey Swordfish type which could make about eighty-five knots if they had a good stiff tail wind. To go in against an adversary such as the *Bismarck* in those crates was worse than suicidal. And those British pilots knew it, don't make any mistake. But they went in and although only one of the six came back, some of them managed to slip their "tin fish" into the *Bismarck's* stern

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sheets and so disabled her steering gear that the British surface ships ultimately were able to dispatch the Nazi.

Before making their attack on the *Bismarck*, the torpedo planes first made a run on the *Modoc*. Apparently they took her for part of the German's screening force, but when they identified her they went on about their real business. This was the first inkling the *Modoc* had of what was going on. Presently, hull down on the horizon, she spotted the *Bismarck* and watched the torpedo planes make their heroic attack.

The skipper of the *Modoc* had no time for the drama of the situation, needless to say, for he quickly realized that he was smack dab in the middle of what proved to be the war's greatest sea battle in the Atlantic! There was a pardonably frantic note in the *Modoc's* radio messages which she began to send out in plain English then, explaining that she was on a rescue mission and had nothing to do with the impending free-for-all.

A little later the *Bismarck* broke radio silence. In what seems in retrospect to have been a lordly, overconfident manner, she told the *Modoc* to get the hell out of the way or else she would not be responsible for what happened. As events proved, the *Bismarck* was unduly concerned because nothing happened to the *Modoc*. It all happened to the *Bismarck*!

When men of the Greenland Patrol tell that story of the *Modoc's* predicament, they sometimes are reminded of a narrow squeak experienced by one of the other cutters in the

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patrol. This one put into a port controlled by the British one day and in the course of conversation about anchorages and related matters, her navigator learned with dismay that they had run right through a British mine field!

"Why doesn't somebody tell me these things?" he wailed. "We just came through the middle of that damn thing!"

"Say," gasped his informant, apparently a very practical chap, "we'd better tell the British that their mines are ineffective!"

Strategically speaking, the Greenland Patrol is just one link in the United Nations' all-important "Bridge of Ships" to Europe and since no bridge is any safer than its own approaches, prompt steps had to be taken to protect the approaches to this one, namely, the ports and water-front facilities from which the ships start crossing the "bridge." Soon after the United States got into the war, the job of protecting those approaches was turned over to the Coast Guard.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### PORT SECURITY

A TORPEDOED tanker, the *Robert Tuttle*, was towed into Hampton Roads in 1942 but disaster still stalked her. The night she arrived, fire broke out in her No. 6 hold.

When Captain Rae Hall, stocky, gray-haired and quietly efficient Coast Guard captain of the port of Norfolk, was notified of the blaze, the first thing he did was order ten tons of dry ice sent to the ship's side.

Hall's first thought was that he would try putting out the fire in the oil floating around the ship by tossing the dry ice into the flames. Previous experiments had taught him that in calm water, that method of fire fighting would work and he was thinking of saving other valuable war shipping in the key anchorage as much as of extinguishing the *Tuttle's* fire.

"It took some time to get ten tons of dry ice down to the ship," Hall told the American Merchant Marine Conference later, "but in the meantime, we had plenty of experience with fog nozzles and foam. When the dry ice arrived, we had a serious explosion on the *Robert Tuttle*, so No. 6 was then open and pouring out oil. The dry ice was in blocks

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perhaps eighteen inches to a side, and we started throwing it just into the tank. Inside of twenty minutes we had stopped all flareback explosions, and in about thirty-five minutes we had the fire out on the ship.

"I think we would have fought that fire a long time with fog nozzles and foam, and probably would have had the whole harbor afire before we got through."

Incidentally, only two of the ten tons of ice Hall ordered were used in extinguishing the fire.

While this novel fire-fighting method stamps Captain Hall as a resourceful officer, the incident is related rather to illustrate the manifold responsibilities imposed upon the Coast Guard when it was entrusted with the security of the nation's ports.

Fortunately, harbors on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States are far from the combat zones of this war, but they are every bit as important to the successful prosecution of the war as the very tanks and other weapons that are used to fight it. For if anything happened to deprive our ships of the loading and other port facilities here, it would be well-nigh impossible to get those aforementioned weapons to the fighting fronts.

Recognizing the need for positive steps to safeguard the ports, President Roosevelt directed by Executive Order on February 25, 1942, that the Secretary of the Navy take all steps necessary to protect water-front facilities in the United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands

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against injury from sabotage, subversive acts, accidents or other causes.

Forthwith, the Secretary of the Navy delegated the authority and responsibility thus conferred upon him to the Commandant of the Coast Guard.

It was a big job. Not only must the Coast Guard patrol the more than 50,000 miles of U. S. coast line in fair weather and foul, but it must watch every vital dock and pier in every major harbor. The new assignment made the Coast Guard responsible for scrutinizing every person who set foot on any ship or pier connected with the war effort and designated it as the policeman and firewarden for all our water fronts.

The magnitude of the task was staggering but none knew better than the Coast Guard how vitally important its accomplishment was to the war effort.

With industry, agriculture and the armed forces taxing the nation's manpower resources to the limit, however, it was with an understandable enthusiasm that Admiral Waesche greeted the idea of using part-time volunteers for the port-security work.

Much of the work fell at once upon the old Coast Guard Reserve which had been set up in 1939 to provide a reservoir of boats upon which the service could draw in times of emergency. Born to meet a peacetime need, primarily to assist in the dissemination of information on the rudiments of seamanship and rules of the road to the growing thousands of amateur yachtsmen and motorboat owners, the Reserve lived

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and expanded to perform even more vital services in war-time.

Still on a purely voluntary basis, literally thousands of members of the Reserve—known as the Auxiliary since the creation of a purely military reserve—can be found on duty in or around the nation's major harbors. They go out on regular patrols, either in their own boats or those of other members. Lawyers, doctors, truckmen, in fact men from almost every walk of life, are represented and they glory in the fact that while they may be too old or otherwise disqualified for military service, they are making a real contribution to the fight against the Axis.

A Coast Guard official from Washington headquarters got a graphic view of a cross section of the Auxiliary one day when he boarded one of its boats in Boston harbor. Before he had been long on the cruise, he discovered that the crew included a bartender, an undertaker, a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest.

By no means all of the boats which belong to the Auxiliary—they number more than 10,000—engage in patrol activities, but they are available, just in case. Not all of the plans that have been made for them can be revealed, either, for military reasons.

The spectacularly heroic performance of Britain's small boatowners in the evacuation of Dunkirk will go down in history, of course, but while no one visualizes anything like a parallel opportunity for America's boatmen, there are possi-

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ble situations in which they could render tremendous services.

In New York, for example, the Auxiliary's members have long been planning what to do in the event that anything should happen to the system of bridges and ferries linking Brooklyn to Manhattan. Even a short interruption to those services in rush hours would be crippling to the metropolis—but if the Auxiliary has anything to say, nothing like that will happen.

When the Japs struck at Pearl Harbor, the Auxiliary was not caught napping. In the important Pacific Coast port of San Francisco, for instance, a dozen powerboat skippers had mustered the crews and were on patrol—just in case.

As we have seen, the advent of war imposed a terrific burden on the Coast Guard on the landward side of our ports and in an effort to cope with that problem, another unique civilian volunteer organization came into being. It is officially known now as the Coast Guard Volunteer Port Security Force.

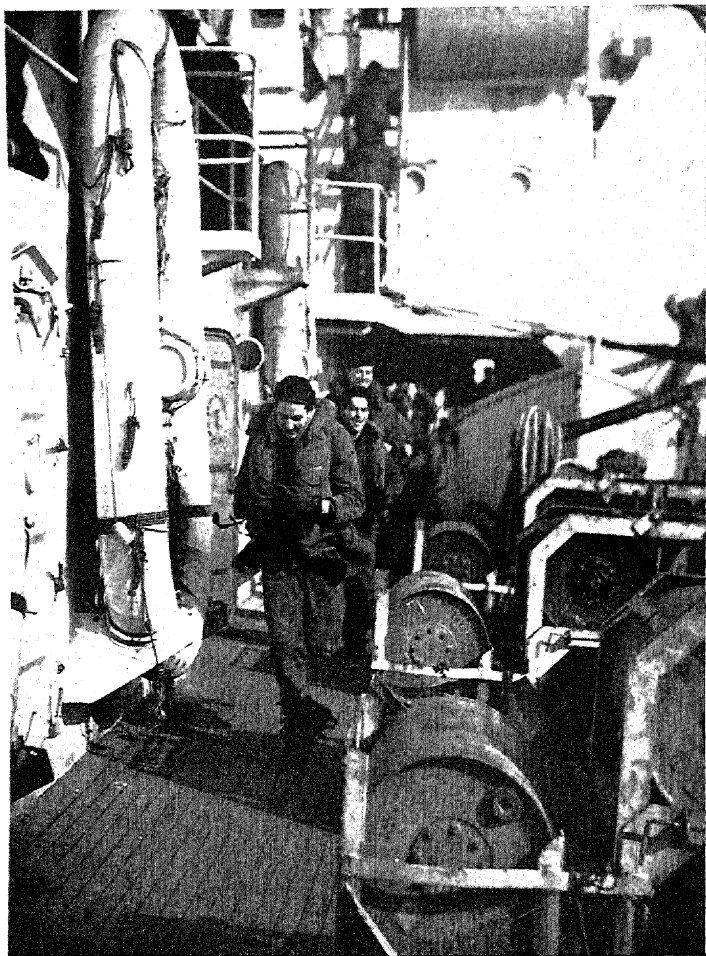
It was born in Philadelphia, the birthplace of many of our national institutions, and originally was referred to as the "Philadelphia Plan." It was so successful that it quickly was adopted in major port cities like Baltimore, Cleveland, Duluth, Tampa, Jacksonville, and subsequently was being organized in every port city of the country.

Like the Auxiliary, it numbers men from all walks of life





HELMSMAN ON ANTISUBMARINE PATROL



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

### GENERAL QUARTERS!

There's no time for comedy when General Quarters is sounded aboard a Coast Guard cutter. The smiles you see on these Coast Guardsmen mean only that this is the moment they've been waiting for—an enemy submarine has just been detected and every man is running to his battle station. The picture was taken aboard the cutter *Spencer* in the North Atlantic.

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—many of whom served the nation in former wars and who want to feel that they are doing a real service in this one.

Plans for the Volunteer Reserve originated with D. Fedotoff White, chairman of the British Ministry of War Transport, Philadelphia committee, and Donald Jenks, assistant director of railway transportation and supervisor of port conditions for the Office of Defense Transportation. It was natural that such a plan should stem from Philadelphia, for even before the United States entered the war tremendous quantities of war materials were moving seaward down the Delaware. Saboteurs, fire and many other hazards were ever-present threats to the security of those cargoes.

White and Jenks talked to Admiral Waesche about the plan and found him warmly in favor of it. Authorization for enlistment of an initial regiment of 152 officers and 1,000 men was forthcoming immediately. Two days after the announcement was broadcast that the regiment was to be formed, more than 800 applications were received and many others eager to join visited the offices of Harold W. Scott, vice-president of the Pennsylvania Company, who had been commissioned as commander of the regiment.

Bankers, clerks, professional men of many types flocked into the new organization, particularly those who for one reason or another could serve the country in no other way, for besides giving them a chance to do their bit, it also was a change from their daily routines and offered a chance of excitement now and then. After basic training in general

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fire prevention, anti-sabotage and anti-espionage and other security work, the men are taught to handle weapons and are instructed, too, in the proper methods of loading and handling explosives aboard ship.

They agree in advance to stand regular watches of eight hours every fifth or sixth day. They may be on duty aboard a ship being loaded with munitions, patrolling a dock or stretch of water front or merely inspecting identification cards at a dock entrance. But whatever their task, they know they are helping to prevent any interruption to the vitally important flow of men and munitions to the far-flung fighting fronts. They also have the satisfaction of knowing that their performance of the work is releasing another man for a combat post.

Although the Coast Guard's Port Security Force geared itself from the start to combat sabotage, fire is the great and ever-present threat to the safety of United Nations' ships and their precious cargoes when they're in port. In the first place, the very character of those cargoes—ammunition, explosives, aviation gasoline—makes them natural fire hazards. The speed with which ships have to be loaded in wartime renders it more difficult for the longshoremen to exercise the proper care in their work and, what is more dangerous, many of the latter are inexperienced persons attracted to the water front by high wage scales.

The constant fear of the Coast Guard, for example, is that one of those untrained dock workers will accidentally drop

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a case of hand grenades or some similar item. Then, too, there is always the possibility that some careless worker or crew member will drop a cigarette butt where it will do no good. It's to guard against such accidents or mistakes that the Port Security Force must be on its toes every minute.

In addition to fire-prevention measures, the Coast Guard had to be prepared to fight fires if they did get started. Consequently, it has assembled the world's greatest fleet of fireboats. At the same time this is written, the fleet numbers 250 such craft, equipped with the most up-to-date apparatus. They are based in the most important ports but, of course, that rating of some of the ports changes with the war and, accordingly, the Coast Guard shifts its fireboats to wherever the activity is greatest.

The men in charge of the Port Security problem maintain a close liaison with both the Army and Navy and they know from day to day what each of those services is planning for the various ports. They know, too, that once the war in Europe is over, that against Japan will grow in intensity and port activity will shift to the Pacific Coast. They are ready for that, also.

To provide crews for the fireboats as well as to train other Coast Guard personnel in fire prevention and fire fighting on shipboard, a special school was established at historic Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor. There the men are taught the latest methods of combating oil fires, explosions,

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how to confine a blaze to one section of a ship and a host of other practices.

"We took in a lot of firemen from municipal departments," one Coast Guard officer related, "but just because a man knows how to fight a house fire is no guarantee that he can handle fires aboard a ship. We found that out."

At the Fort McHenry school, the men are trained in the use of so-called "fog nozzles"—devices which throw water on a stubborn fire in such a fine spray that it resembles fog which literally blankets the blaze, reduces the temperature in a confined space to a point where the fire fighters can get at the blaze and employ whatever other measures are necessary to extinguish it. The use of all types of chemical methods for fighting oil fires, such as carbon dioxide "foam," is also part of the curriculum.

The fact that such training and caution pays handsome dividends is evident in the absence of serious fires on our important water fronts. There have been plenty of small ones start, but they were discovered so promptly and the men trained to subdue them were available in such numbers that they never had a chance. The fire on the former French luxury liner *Normandie* is such a controversial subject that this is not the place for its discussion, but in fairness to the Coast Guard it should be said that the service was not responsible for the fighting of that fire.

When the Coast Guard was made the guardian of port security, it had only a skeleton organization to handle it. To-

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day the force engaged in that work alone is far larger than the entire peacetime Coast Guard. It includes more than 30,000 enlisted men, almost 2,000 harbor patrol boats and the fireboat fleet.

In direct charge of the program are 99 Captains of the Port in the more important harbor cities, and approximately 150 Assistant Captains of the Port in places of lesser importance.

At the outset, the Coast Guard found a maze of conflicting or overlapping regulations, frequently differing for individual ports, with which merchant ships had to comply, so one of the first things the service did on taking over Port Security was to issue a standardized set of regulations, greatly reduced in number and clarified so that the masters of ships would always know what was expected of them in any American port.

Foreign languages presented quite a problem in this respect and to meet it, the Coast Guard prepared a ten-language poster containing some of the basic rules and regulations. In the preparation of the poster, unique in the number of languages used for one poster, officials ran into a number of difficulties. For instance, they had a terrible time in Washington trying to find a typewriter with Greek characters which they could use in setting up the Greek portion of the poster. They finally found one—the only one of its kind in the city.

Because of the increasingly large number of foreign lan-

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guage skippers and crews with which the Port Security Force had to deal, the Coast Guard found itself urgently in need of linguists and it was a source of amazement to many of the officials that they were able to fill this need from the ranks of their own enlisted personnel. They went into the "boot" camps and found no difficulty in locating men who could speak Russian, Dutch, Polish, French and all the other United Nations' tongues. Just as soon as those men are ready to leave the training camp, they are assigned to the Port Security Force and detailed wherever their linguistic abilities can best be used. On the West Coast, for example, there was a great need for men who could speak Russian because a substantial number of Russian ships come in there.

Incidentally, not all of the Port Security Force's troubles are linguistic. For example, the chief engineer of a Russian ship was on the verge of having a baby when the ship arrived in the United States—many Russian ships now have women in their crews—and the Port Security officers found themselves with the task of getting an ambulance and making other arrangements to get the woman into a hospital.

In drafting its regulations for the control of vessels in port, the Coast Guard incorporated a certain amount of "calculated risk." On the premise that nothing should be done which would unduly hamper the efficient operation of the vitally needed ships, certain restrictions which might have delayed the turnaround—the time a ship spends in port loading or unloading and refitting—were either liberalized or



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eliminated. To insure a properly balanced set of regulations, the draft of the standardized rules was submitted to the Navy and War Shipping Administration, to ship operators and to the maritime labor organizations and then all hands were invited to a round-table discussion of them at Coast Guard Headquarters where a final draft was evolved.

"We have been working under these regulations for almost a year," a Port Security officer said, "and the fact that we have had practically no adverse comments concerning them indicates the time and thought which all concerned put into their preparation. They are, I believe, in the opinion of all parties interested, a proper balance between the need for security measures for vessels and the necessity that the operative efficiency of our ships be maintained at a maximum."

Primary responsibility for compliance with the regulations, of course, rests with the masters, owners, operators and agents of the ships. In brief, the regulations require the maintenance aboard at all times of a crew of officers and men equivalent to a regular deck and engine watch. Additional guards—ship guards, fire guards and cargo guards—also are required in numbers varying with the job being done and the size of the ship. Steam pressure must be maintained or else the ship's fire-fighting system and switchboard must be hooked up with shore sources, for obvious reasons. Some means of propulsion must also be maintained, unless permission is obtained from the Captain of the Port to dis-

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pense with it. This is necessary in the event that the ship itself catches fire and must be moved to protect the pier or near-by ships. It might also be necessary to move the ship to protect it from fires on other ships.

Frequent inspections of vessels in port are made by the Coast Guard to see that the regulations are being carried out and every effort is made to impress upon all concerned the need for unceasing vigilance. A favorite warning given is that the loss of a ship and its cargo in these days might well be equivalent, in terms of tanks, planes and other war supplies, to a severe loss upon the battlefield. It might be even worse, for the failure of such supplies to arrive on the battle fronts at the proper time might well result in even greater losses.

In these days of oil-burning ships, one of the gravest menaces to vessels in port is the presence of oil on the water. Careless or inexperienced skippers—and with the tremendous expansion in the size of the Merchant Marine, there are many of the latter—sometimes permit their engine crews to pump their bilges in port. There are supposed to pump them at sea before they get to port, or into specially provided barges which can later be emptied at sea. However, rough weather and the pressure for a speedy turnaround frequently impel the skippers to disregard the rules. When they do, it puts a film of waste oil on the surface of the water around the ship which soon spreads over the harbor. Thus a fire on one ship might quickly spread around the entire port.

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Therefore, one of the Coast Guard's most important jobs is to patrol the water around the ships regularly to see that they are not violating that highly important regulation.

Because the fire hazard is so great, the Coast Guard makes it a rule to survey all ships and port facilities frequently to determine the existence of such hazards and point them out to the operators. Usually they have been removed promptly, but occasionally the service has had to crack down and use the teeth in its authority to obtain compliance.

In peacetime one of the difficulties in fighting water-front fires was that many municipalities did not have enough or proper equipment for such work. It was to correct that lack that the Coast Guard acquired the 250-odd fireboats, the smallest of which has a pumping capacity of 2,000 gallons a minute. In addition, it secured several hundred trailer pumps, well suited to that type of work because they draw water directly from the harbor or stream, without the need of standpipes or hydrants.

Incidentally, when the war is over, it is the hope of Coast Guard officials dealing with the matter that the municipalities will see their way clear to taking over a large part of this harbor fire-fighting equipment. Ways and means of arranging such transfers already are under study.

In the early days of the war, the specter of widespread sabotage of our ports and ships spoiled the sleep of many officials in this country, not only in the Coast Guard. And the potential menace was real enough, although as a result

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of either the prompt and comprehensive preventive measures or the enemy's deliberate abstinence from that form of attack, little or no trouble of that nature developed. To guard against it, one of the first things the Coast Guard had to do was to deny access to the water fronts to anyone who might have sabotage in mind. This meant the establishment of an identification system which would not impede the regular business of the piers and other water-front facilities.

Today no one is permitted on a water-front facility unless he possesses a Coast Guard identification card issued by the Captain of the Port. The card can be obtained only after the applicant has satisfactorily identified himself, established his citizenship, has been sponsored by a reputable person or association and been fingerprinted on forms submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for checking with their files. Literally millions of such cards have been issued since the system went into effect and the lack of public criticism of the inconvenience which results is the best testimonial to the manner in which it has worked.

To guard against unauthorized persons getting aboard vessels in port by coming alongside in a boat, thus evading the identification card setup, the Coast Guard requires all vessels moving in or from local waters to have a movement or departure license. The combination has given the service a substantial measure of control over the access to vessels and shipping facilities both from the land and water sides.

Despite the lack of widespread sabotage attempts, which

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many expected as soon as the United States got into the war, some of the Port Security officials figured that when the German U-boat campaign failed to destroy the "Bridge of Ships" to Britain and our own fighting forces, the Nazis would next try to "hit us through our ports." In other words, if they couldn't sink the ships in transit, they would try to damage them at their piers or make the loading facilities unusable. Accordingly, precautionary measures were intensified, guards were alerted and everything conceivable was done to be ready. Until this writing, that fear has likewise proved unwarranted. Naturally, the Coast Guard won't relax its watchfulness deliberately until the danger really no longer exists.

Officials in charge of the Port Security program maintain that even if they could be assured that the danger of sabotage had been completely and permanently eliminated, their task still would be much greater than it was at the start of the war or even a year ago and probably won't reach its peak for some time. The explanation for this, of course, is that the problem grows with the volume of shipping to and from the battle-fronts and with shipbuilding activity. There's nothing static about it. It can almost be said, in fact, that the Port Security Force never knows what to expect next.

An example of the unexpected nature of some of their problems was furnished at a ship repair yard. A vessel that had run aground on a rocky shore was brought into dry dock for repairs. Unknown to the repair company, the fuel-oil tanks

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had been punctured but the oil was held in by outside water pressure. But after the ship had been shored up in the dry dock and pumping had been started to drain the dock, the tanks suddenly began to disgorge their contents and soon a thick and menacing film of oil had spread far beyond the dry dock.

The situation was critical, not only for the repair crew aboard the ship surrounded by a pool of oil but for all the other ships and facilities of various kinds in the vicinity. A single spark from a welding torch might have been all that was necessary to start a conflagration. Prompt action stopping all so-called "hot work" such as welding and cutting, forbidding all smoking and similar precautions to control sources of possible ignition averted a disaster and the oil menace was removed.

Careful study not only of the conditions which cause fires but of the fires themselves has given the Coast Guard some interesting data on the subject so far as the nation's ports are concerned. In the nine-month period from October 1942 to June 1943, inclusive, there were 2,111 water-front fires reported to Coast Guard Headquarters. Of these 16.6 percent were caused by welding or cutting operations with acetylene or electric torches; only 8.7 percent by smoking or the careless use of matches. And not a single blaze was reported as being of incendiary origin!

Generally speaking, the work of the men of the Port Security Force—actual patrolling of the piers, supervision of

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the loading of ammunition and all the other activities—is unutterably dull. Theirs is not the glamorous role of the fighting man, and all the medals they have received up to this writing would not crowd a hollow tooth.

Nevertheless, they have more than one exploit to their credit that for sheer, unadulterated intestinal fortitude will take a lot of beating.

One spring night in 1943, when New Yorkers were still getting used to living without benefit of neon lights, skilled stevedores were just putting the finishing touches to the loading of an ammunition ship across the bay at the Caven's Point pier. This long, slender dock juts diagonally out into Lower New York Harbor almost as though someone had started to build a bridge to the Brooklyn shore and then gave up the idea. There was a definite reason for the tremendous length of the structure, however, for it is there that the bulk of the ammunition and high explosive that moves through the Port of New York is loaded aboard ship. And it's no military secret that that is plenty.

On the night in question, the last of some 1,300 tons of explosive—enough for 650 of the two-ton block-busters that the Germans have come to know so well—had been placed aboard the ship. She was due to sail that night, was just about to cast off from the pier, in fact, when fire broke out in the boiler room in a location that was difficult to get at. It spread rapidly.

Coast Guard and City of New York fireboats, notified by

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radio, were rushed to the scene together with land and pier fire-fighting equipment. A force of 200 Coast Guardsmen from a near-by barracks also arrived.

Lieutenant Commander John T. Stanley, a veteran of fifteen years' service in the Coast Guard who had just taken charge of ammunition loading in the Port of New York that day, was in immediate command of the fire-fighting operations.

Here was a situation that was fraught with peril not only for the firemen and others in the immediate vicinity but for thousands of others in the densely populated sections of Staten Island, Brooklyn and even Manhattan itself, the towers of which could be seen dimly on the night sky line.

Stanley and the others knew only too well what they were up against. The 1300 tons of explosives aboard the burning ship were just about the same quantity which demolished a large part of the north end of Halifax, Nova Scotia, one December morning in 1917, leaving a couple of thousand dead and other thousands homeless. But, emulating the heroism of the intrepid little group of Royal Navy men who went aboard the burning ammunition ship in Halifax harbor that day, only to perish in the blast which followed, Stanley and his men boarded the ship at the Caven's Point pier.

In the course of the preliminary efforts to extinguish the blaze, a white-haired Army officer wearing the two stars of a major general boarded the ship. He was Major General



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Charles Groninger, commandant of the New York Port of Embarkation, who blandly disregarded the horrible danger of the situation and came to see for himself if everything possible was being done to avert the threatened catastrophe. His young aide, brand new on the job, was with him.

"Well, I didn't last long in the Army," the youngster had told himself when he heard where they were going that night.

Stanley quickly discovered that efforts to extinguish the fire were not making much headway. The only thing left was to scuttle the ship. Because of the fire, it was impossible to get at the sea cocks, so Stanley had the ship towed out into the bay a couple of hundred yards from the pier and the fireboats then began pumping water into her.

For two hours they pumped, with no one knowing during that time whether the fire or the water would win that unusual race with disaster. Finally the ship began to settle. She went down on an even keel and in a short time only her masts and funnel could be seen. The danger was over.

Meanwhile, the residents of Staten Island and Brooklyn had been warned by radio to keep their windows open and to remain away from glass that might shatter. Fortunately, such precautions proved unnecessary. Next day New York learned the details of its narrow escape.

Months later another American port city had a somewhat similar experience—but only a handful of people knew about it.

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On that occasion fire broke out in a freight car loaded with ammunition. It was at a freight terminal in close proximity to the city's downtown business district.

Lieutenant (j.g.) Harold Waters, commanding the Coast Guard's ammunition detail in that city, called for volunteers from among his men when word of the fire reached him. He selected ten from those who responded and rushed to the terminal in a truck. Railroad police and employees were grouped some distance from the burning car, expecting its deadly cargo to let go at any minute.

Waters ordered them still farther away and then led his men to the car and began a systematic attack upon the fire. There was none of the excitement of battle to stimulate those men, just the cold certainty that any minute might be their last. Yet they didn't falter and to that fact many a man and woman in that city owe their lives. But they don't even know it.

The fact that there has not been, up to this writing, a serious explosion of ammunition despite the stupendous quantities which are constantly moving through our major ports is a glowing tribute to the manner in which the Coast Guard and all others involved have handled that phase of port security, but the foregoing two incidents also serve to illustrate graphically why it has been so successful.

In its twenty-four-hour-a-day effort to prevent any such disaster, the Coast Guard supervises the loading of explosives on all commercial ships and the movement of all explosives

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from the time the seal on the freight car door is broken until the ship is safely out of the harbor.

They are the arbiters as to whether longshoremen are qualified to handle cargoes of explosives—and in these days of relatively high wages for work on the water front and because of the scarcity of manpower, a lot of below-par workers are on the labor market—and they also keep a trained man at each cargo hatch into which explosives are being lowered to see that no unsafe practices are being used and that the explosive is stowed in the proper manner in the ship's hold.

Some of the factors which complicate the task of the Port Security people are worthy of mention.

"Owing to the pressure on ocean transports and the demand for cargo space," explains R. C. Stange, a fire-prevention expert assigned to the Port Security division, "the maintenance and repair of ships suffers in comparison with peacetime standards. Time is lacking and repair facilities are not always available to keep vessels in first-class condition. Consequently, we find leaking oil lines, defective oil burners, extinguishing equipment in poor condition and other unsatisfactory circumstances. Oily bilges cannot always be pumped out on schedule for lack of barges or shore tanks.

"Crew members back from trips through submarine-infested waters are understandably not greatly concerned with the minor perils of existence, and interest in fire-prevention measures suffer accordingly. The remedies for the situation

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are simple, but not always easy to effect. However, the Coast Guard is constantly endeavoring to see that ships are maintained in such condition as to be reasonably safe from fire, through constant inspections and reinspections and enforcement of the statutory regulations for the security of vessels in port. . . .”

Stange explained how in at least one major instance battle-field requirements increased the hazard of fire in the ports of the United States.

“Normally large-scale transportation of gasoline by water is accomplished in bulk by tankers especially designed and built for the purpose, with all the safeguards that the fire-prevention engineer can devise,” he said. “The needs of troops in outlying bases and in the field have necessitated a decided change in this method of handling inflammable liquids.

“Gasoline must be furnished in drums or in five-gallon cans or even in smaller containers according to the demands of the field units. They are shipped in ordinary cargo vessels without the compartmentation, fire-extinguishing equipment, explosion-proof electrical equipment and other appurtenances of the regular tankers. To complicate the problem still further, the drums and cans employed are usually single-trip containers with the thin shells quickly susceptible to corrosion effects and not capable of resisting rough handling. They must be handled in such a way that the shells are not punctured nor the seams ruptured. They cannot be piled or

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stowed in deep tiers or the containers will burst under excessive weight.

“When this occurs or leakage takes place for any reason we have gasoline vapors seeping through the hold of the ship not only while it is being loaded, but more especially when it is being unloaded, perhaps under very adverse conditions (such as with enemy dive bombers only too willing to pour a few rounds of incendiary shells or bullets into the open hatches of such a vapor-charged hold). This means extreme precaution in the way of ventilation and elimination of sources of flame or spark.

“The hazard of gasoline in lightweight containers is not confined to the ship. We have storages along the water front of thousands of drums awaiting shipment; there is also a great deal of gasoline cargo handled by barge on our rivers and harbors. This entire subject of safe handling of gasoline and other low-flash petroleum products in drums and cans has been given a great deal of study. Storage patterns have been worked out which make possible the rapid detection of leakers, unraveling of piles and the control of incipient fires.”

And although the records show that a couple of thousand water-front fires have occurred in less than a year, the great majority of them were snuffed out without the aid of major fire-fighting equipment. The important thing to remember is that they were discovered before they had made any headway. In that connection, it is also worthy of note that in spite

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of the fact that thousands of private watchmen, guards and fire watches are on duty in water-front establishments, Coast Guardsmen on patrol or guard duty discovered and sent in the first alarm for 22 percent of the 2,319 alarms reported to headquarters as having been sounded for water-front fires in the period from October 1942 to June 1943, inclusive!

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SAND-POUNDERS

A TRIO of shadowy figures clambered out of a small boat on a deserted stretch of Long Island beach and walked quickly away from the water's edge. They were soon lost to view in the fog and the solitary oarsman in the boat stood up and shoved his light craft back into deeper water. A few minutes' rowing brought him to the dark, cigar-shaped hull of a submarine where willing hands helped him lift the light-weight, collapsible rowboat aboard and lower it through a scuttle.

No words were spoken and no time was lost. The U-boat, for it *was* a German sub, turned slowly and headed eastward into the Atlantic and soon even the steady throb of her Diesels died away.

Meanwhile, on the beach, the rowboat's three erstwhile passengers were just in the act of filling in a hole they had dug in the sand. Still visible in the excavation were portions of the German naval uniforms which they had worn over civilian clothing.

"Get a move on, Reilly," rasped one of the trio. "Get that hole filled in. We don't want daylight to catch us here."

"I'm doing the best I can with only this board for a shovel,

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Hans," replied the one addressed as Reilly. "And you don't have to start using that Irish name on me already, do you?"

"You know what the *Direktor* said," chimed in the third man. "We were to adopt our new identities the minute we had changed clothes. Remember, all our credentials have our new names on them."

Finally the hole was filled and all trace of their digging obliterated. The three men then headed inland, each carrying a couple of bundles wrapped in heavy paper.

At a tree-bordered concrete highway they stopped.

Hans, whose last name was Kluege, set his parcels down and turned to his companions.

"Here's where I leave you," he said. "I'm going north. There ought to be buses or trucks along for all of us soon, but in the meantime we'd better separate.

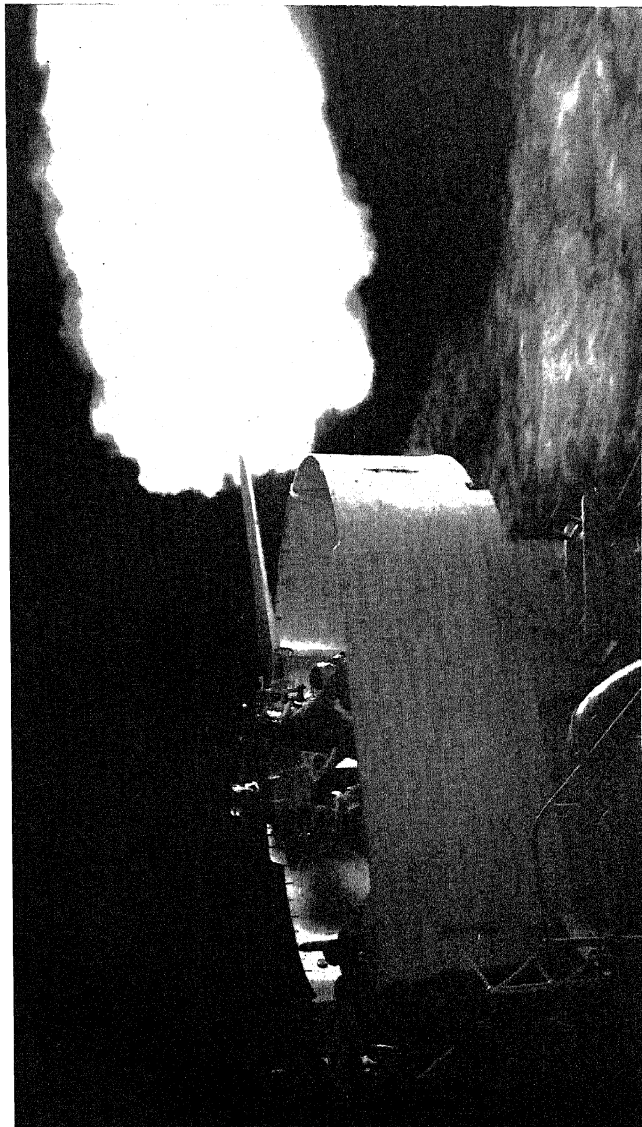
"I'll meet you back here in three weeks."

Without even the formality of a handshake, they moved off into the foggy night. Reilly, whose real name was Gunther Diehl, and the tall, thin individual named Johann Wahl, or John Wall as his phony draft registration card read, turned their steps toward New York.

As he trudged in the opposite direction, Kluege gloated inwardly. Their landing had been a complete success. Soon they would be swallowed up in the country's heterogeneous population.

"These stupid Americans," he told himself. "We come in right under their noses and they know nothing of it. It





*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

**COAST GUARD CUTTER'S GUN BLASTS AT U-BOAT**

Somewhere in mid-Atlantic, the three-inch gun of a U. S. Coast Guard cutter fires point-blank at an enemy sub, as the cutter protects a convoy.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

### NAZI CAPTIVE FROM SUBMARINE

Glad to be out of the cold water, this Nazi submarine lieutenant is hustled below for hot coffee, after being fished from the sea.

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might just as easily have been an invasion force. But that will come later."

At the Nazi school for saboteurs in Berlin, from which he and his erstwhile companions had been graduated a few weeks ago, Kluege had been told repeatedly that their missions often might be in the nature of preparations for invasions, organization of Fifth Column activities and similar tasks. This assignment had nothing to do with invasion, however. On the contrary, it was aimed at doing the maximum possible damage to America's growing war potential so that American troops would not be able to do anything about invasions for some time to come.

Kluege was bound for Fall River, Massachusetts. In Berlin they had furnished him with the name and address of a German-American family to whom he was instructed to go. To them, of course, he was to represent himself merely as a former resident of Milwaukee who had come east to obtain a job in a war plant.

The lights of a truck swinging around a bend in the road behind him cut short his soliloquy and he turned to "thumb" a ride. Luck was with him again, for despite the hour and the loneliness of the section, the driver stopped. Perhaps it was because there were two men in the spacious cab.

"Where yuh headed, bud?" the driver asked.

"Fall River," said Kluege.

"Hop in, then. I'm going through to Boston, but I can haul you a good piece of the way."

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Once in the truck, Kluege explained he had just come off a ship in New York the day before and was on his way to visit friends while the ship was in dry dock.

"You smell like you slept in the bilges, chum," the truck driver said bluntly. "Them clothes you're wearing surely do need a little shore leave."

Had he only known it, the smell he referred to was the submarine's all-pervading smell of Diesel fuel oil. Kluege had a few anxious moments when he realized that the truckman had detected something which he, himself, had grown so accustomed to in the past few weeks that it no longer seemed strange to him. He could only hope that the fresh air would lessen the pungency of his garments before he reached Fall River.

From Providence he took a bus to Fall River, arriving at the home of the Schraft family not long before their evening dinner hour.

"I knew your son Heinrich in Milwaukee, Mrs. Schraft," he said. "He told me you probably would be able to tell me where to get a room around here."

Kluege was taking no chance when he talked of knowing Heinrich Schraft. He knew plenty about the son, even if he had never seen him. The Gestapo had taken care of that.

"Come in, come in," said Mrs. Schraft, delighted with the prospect of word of her son.

Nothing would do but Kluege must stay for dinner and

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meet Heinrich's father. He worked at the rubber factory and should be home any minute.

Naturally, it was because Mr. Schraft worked at the rubber factory that Kluege and his superiors had selected that family for him to visit. But the plan was working even better than they had hoped. For, when the older Schraft arrived and was introduced, he insisted—after a whispered consultation with his wife—that Kluege occupy Heinrich's room "at least until you get settled."

After a polite interval with the family when dinner was over, Kluege excused himself and said he thought he'd stroll around the town for a while. Before leaving, he went to his room and came down with a small paper-wrapped parcel which he explained contained a couple of soiled shirts which he would leave at a near-by Chinese laundry.

It was a simple task, as he let himself out the back door, to slip Herr Schraft's identification badge from his work coat hanging in the porch.

Kluege's package of "laundry" turned out to be a commonplace workman's lunch box when he removed the wrapping and several hours later, wearing Schraft's badge with its number and small photograph, he joined the stream of workers pouring into the rubber plant for the midnight shift.

As he suspected, the guards at the gate gave him only a cursory glance. Once they saw the badge on his lapel, the lunch box under his arm, they thought no more about him.

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It was the kind of thing the psychology experts can explain quite glibly. In simple terms, it was just gall and strict conformity to the herd pattern, doing what everyone else in the crowd was doing.

The rubber factory was housed in an old New England textile mill, a six-story brick structure that had turned a deep burgundy shade with the passage of years. The only elevators were a couple of hydraulic freight lifts at either end of the block-long building. Consequently, the workers had to climb wide, wooden stairways to get to their posts on the upper floors. This was exactly what Kluege wanted, for it gave him a chance to tour the whole plant without attracting attention.

When he had found the spots he was looking for, Kluege retraced his steps. This time, he made a number of stops en route. There was nothing furtive about his movements, however, nothing to create the least bit of suspicion. Had anyone taken the trouble to watch closely, though, they might have seen him dropping slender cylinders that resembled fountain pens into odd places—behind a pile of cartons at the base of an elevator shaft, for example, amid bales of cotton-wrapped supplies and in trash barrels.

The cylinders, of course, were thermite pencils which burst into furious flames a short time after Kluege had walked through the main gate where the guards joked with him about the overtime pay he was accumulating. Even before he reached the Schraft home, the sky was reddened by the

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glow of fire which raced through the tinder-dry old plant. The wail of fire-engine sirens roused the sleeping city.

Next morning's papers carried banner headlines reading:

"FLAMES DESTROY HUGE RUBBER STOCK PILE." "HUNDRED THOUSAND TONS OF MOST CRITICAL MATERIAL RUINED."

At the breakfast table Kluege tried to lighten the gloom of the Schraft family by joking about the distance he had traveled to get a job which promptly went up in smoke—but he failed dismally. On the other hand, he thus reminded the Schrafts that he had a perfectly logical explanation for moving on to Boston in search of work; that is, in the event that his departure so soon after the mysterious fire had caused anyone to wonder.

Gunther Diehl had a little more trouble with his plans in New York. The day after he arrived he struck up an acquaintance with a young chap named Erich Keller whom he met in a restaurant. Diehl had watched Keller's boardinghouse and followed him to the restaurant, of course, but to Keller it seemed like any ordinary chance meeting.

Keller, it developed, was employed as a welder aboard the British liner, *Queen Mary*, which was then in the process of being converted to use as an Allied troopship.

"Do you suppose I could get a job there?" Diehl asked. "I'm a welder, too."

"Well——" Keller hesitated. "There's a lot of red tape involved. You got to be investigated, you know. It's a Navy job."

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Diehl dropped the subject for the time and the two went out to a movie when they had finished their dinner. A couple of days passed and Diehl called on Keller at the latter's room.

"Erich," Diehl began. "I have just got to get aboard the *Queen Mary*, and I want your help."

"Gee, I don't see how I can help you," objected Keller. "There's just no way I could get you in."

"Keller," interrupted Diehl softly. "You got a mother and sister in Germany, haven't you?"

"Ye-yes," stammered the other, startled. "But what's that got to do with it? I'm an American citizen and they would be, too, if I could get them over here."

"But you wouldn't want anything to happen to them, would you, just because you refused a simple request? . . . Ever heard of Dachau, Keller?"

"You mean the concentration camp?"

"Yes, exactly."

Fear glittered in Keller's eyes momentarily. Suddenly he knew only too well what he was up against in Diehl. The Gestapo!

"What do you want me to do?" he asked dully.

"Just take a day off tomorrow," said Diehl smoothly. "That isn't asking much, now is it? You just stay home, sleep late as you like. Take in a movie in the afternoon or go fishing. Anything you like. Meantime I take your badge and go to work in your place. Nobody will know the dif-



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ference. I'll tell your gang you're sick and the union sent me in your place."

And that was how it worked. Diehl climbed the gangway to the *Queen Mary's* broad main deck just before the work whistle blew. Everyone was in too much of a hurry to pay particular attention to him.

When he found Keller's group, they accepted his story without question and soon he was busily at work with the welding torch. He had not tinkered with the truth in any sense when he told Keller he was a welder, for he was a good one. Nobody had any cause for suspicion on that score.

When lunchtime rolled around, the workers broke up into their usual little groups, many of them climbing to the boat deck where they could enjoy the sun while they ate.

Diehl found himself alone near where he had been working all morning. This suited him beautifully. He squatted on the deck, his back against a steel bulkhead, and opened his lunch box. Carefully removing the top from the thermos bottle, he inserted what looked like a metal straw and pretended to drink deeply.

Actually his "straw" was a type of spray. Youngsters use them to spray "dope" on the wings of their model airplanes.

The thermos bottle was filled with kerosene and, instead of drinking milk or coffee, Diehl was carefully spraying with kerosene a six-foot pile of kapok life jackets stored at one side of the deck. It is doubtful that he would have been

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discovered even had anyone come along while he was thus engaged.

After leisurely finishing his sandwiches, he capped the thermos, closed the lunch box and got to his feet. A few feet away his welding torch lay on the deck. Strolling over, he picked it up, pulled his safety goggles down over his eyes and began adjusting the flow of air and acetylene gas into the nozzle of the torch.

A shower of sparks shot from the torch and before anyone could do anything to prevent it, the pile of life jackets was a roaring inferno.

So many of the workers and fire guards were at lunch that before any organized effort could be made to combat the blaze, the greater part of the deck on which the fire started was in flames. The numerous coats of paint which covered the interior of the great liner caught swiftly, causing the flames to race along the length of the ship like a prairie fire.

The fact that the great ship turned turtle late that night from the weight of water and ice which formed in its upper decks was a windfall which neither Diehl nor his colleagues had even hoped for, but even if that added disaster had not occurred, he would have destroyed the ship's usefulness to the Allies for many critical months.

Diehl was among the group of somber-eyed workmen whom the police ordered off the dock while the fire still was

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under way. And no one raised a hand to stop him as he walked through the main gate and disappeared.

Three weeks from the night the U-boat had set them ashore on the Long Island beach, Kluege and Diehl met at their rendezvous. This time they shook hands, for each knew how successful the other had been. Newspapers throughout the length and breadth of the land had heralded their exploits without, of course, any mention of their names or even any definite suggestion that anything more than accidents had been responsible.

"Where's Wahl?" Kluege asked.

Diehl shook his head.

"I never saw him after we got to New York."

What they didn't know was that their colleague had plummeted from one of the concrete piers of a railroad bridge across the Susquehanna, shot in the back of the head by a vigilant guard who surprised him in the act of placing a charge of explosive at the base of the pier. The authorities kept the incident quiet, hoping thereby to get a lead on the dead man's associates and to find out whether his attempt to blow up the bridge was an isolated case of sabotage or part of a widespread plot.

Kluege and Diehl waited half an hour longer than the time agreed upon and then made their way to the beach. The sub's little rubber boat was waiting for them. If Wahl came later, too bad. He'd just have to look out for himself.

The depredations here attributed to Kluege and Diehl are

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things that might have happened. They didn't happen, of course, but it is not going too far to say that the only reason such things, or incidents strikingly like them, didn't happen is that John C. Cullen, a twenty-one-year-old Coast Guardsman attached to the Amagansett, Long Island station, was on the job shortly after midnight on the night that three Nazi saboteurs actually did land on Long Island.

Cullen left the Amagansett station at midnight on the night of the landing to begin the six-mile East Patrol. The weather was thick and visibility poor but when he was only 300 yards from the station, he spied three men on the beach.

One of them was dressed in civilian clothes. The others were in bathing suits and standing in water up to their knees.

"What's the trouble?" Cullen called out.

There was no response, but the man on shore commenced walking toward Cullen.

"Who are you?" demanded Cullen. This time, when the stranger failed to answer, Cullen reached in his hip pocket for a flashlight.

The other apparently thought he was reaching for a weapon, for he cried out:

"Wait a minute. Are you Coast Guard?"

"Yes, who are you?" Cullen countered.

"A couple of fishermen from Southampton who have run aground."

"Come up to the station and wait for daybreak."

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At first the newcomer didn't answer. But when he did, there was a new note in his voice.

"Wait a minute," he snapped. "You don't know what's going on. How old are you? Have you a father and mother? I wouldn't want to have to kill you."

While the young Coast Guardsman was recovering from that outburst, one of the men in bathing suits came up through the fog dragging a bag. He started to speak in German.

"What's in the bag?" asked Cullen. "Clams?"

He knew well enough there were no clams for miles around.

"Yes, that's right," answered the first man. Then, apparently reassured by Cullen's apparent lack of reaction to his threat, he went on in a more friendly vein.

"Why don't you forget the whole thing?" he asked. "Here is some money. One hundred dollars."

"I don't want it," Cullen demurred.

The man took more money from his wallet.

"How about three hundred?"

Cullen thought fast.

"Okay," he said, and took the money.

"Now look me in the eyes," the stranger said.

At first Cullen feared the man was going to try to hypnotize him and he evaded his eyes. The man insisted. Bracing himself to resist, Cullen looked directly at the stranger. To his relief, nothing happened. The stranger kept repeating:

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"Would you recognize me if you saw me again?"

When Cullen finally answered "No," the man appeared satisfied.

Cullen left abruptly, but as soon as he was enshrouded in the fog, he raced for the station and reported what had happened. The officer in charge, a boatswain's mate, immediately telephoned his superiors at their near-by homes and they soon were on the scene.

In the meantime Cullen and three other enlisted men had been armed with rifles and dispatched to the place where Cullen had encountered the strangers, but the latter were nowhere to be seen and there was no trace of their landing. However, Warren Barnes, Chief Boatswain's Mate, spotted a long thin object in the ocean when the fog lifted for a moment. It obviously was a submarine and Barnes, fearful that a landing of more enemy personnel was to be attempted, posted his men behind the sand dunes with orders to repel the invasion.

Fog swallowed the U-boat, however; the noise of its Diesels faded away.

Relieved but still perturbed, the Coast Guardsmen searched the area but without success. Someone reported sighting a light on a distant dune, but when the Guardsmen got there nothing was to be found.

Ultimately Cullen and the others returned to the station to make a full report on the night's events and it was then that Cullen found that the saboteurs had short changed him.

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Instead of \$300, the "bribe" he accepted consisted of only \$260—two fifty dollar bills, five twenties and six tens.

After dawn, the search of the beach and sand dunes was resumed. Soldiers had arrived in the meantime to assist.

Soon after it was light, Cullen and one of his superiors found some cigarettes of German manufacture almost buried in the sand. Another searcher discovered a furrow in the sand and traced it to a spot where someone apparently had been digging. Had they been an hour or so later, the sun would have dried the area so that all trace of the digging would have been obliterated.

As it was, excavation of the spot produced several cases which subsequently proved to contain a number of pen and pencil sets, loose powder and glass tubes—presumably materials for incendiaries. The crates were removed to Coast Guard headquarters at New York and officials there started to complete the inspection of a couple of the unopened crates. When a hissing sound began emanating from them, a report in official files said, "it was suggested that they open it at the end of a pier."

The hissing sound, it developed, came from the contact of salt water with the TNT in the crate!

The rest of the story of the Nazi saboteurs is pretty well known. They were rounded up, along with five others who landed on a Florida beach, and after a sensational, secret military trial at Washington, all but two of them paid with their lives.

## FIRST FLEET

At first, report has it, Cullen got nothing but a bawling out for having been unarmed at the time the trio of Germans accosted him. A little more than a year later, however, he was awarded the Legion of Merit medal.

There was no such delay, however, in profiting from the lessons which Cullen's experience provided. The landings of the saboteurs were rendered ineffective by the vigilance of the Coast Guard and the prompt action of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but conversely, they focused official attention upon the vulnerability of this country's far-flung coastline.

Immediate efforts were taken to increase and intensify the protective measures. More Coast Guardsmen were added, naturally, but what probably was more important, dogs and horses were made a major part of the patrol setup.

It may well be that the execution of the original group of invading saboteurs will completely discourage any further such expeditions, but should the contrary prove true, the visitors can be sure of a warm reception if any of the Coast Guards' scores of specially trained, savage dogs get wind of them. At the pretentious Joseph Widener estate in suburban Philadelphia, the animals were meticulously taught the proper method of tearing a man to pieces. So savage are the dogs which finally are accepted for duty that only their trainer and the Coast Guards with whom they go on patrol can come near them.

By the use of saddle horses, obviously, the patrolmen are



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enabled to cover much more territory and cover it more thoroughly than they could hope to do on foot. Wheeled vehicles, of course, are almost useless on the sandy or rock-strewn beaches which the men must traverse.

Many of the men assigned to beach patrol—"sand-pounders," as they are known in the service—are veterans of much more hazardous duties, for the Coast Guard recognized early that beach patrol offered a splendid opportunity to give the men healthful relaxation from service in combat areas, aboard the hard-worked combat cutters or other arduous posts where they were wounded or suffering from undue battle strain.

Thomas Sortino, twenty-six, of Forest Park, Illinois, is a typical example of how the Coast Guard finds practical solutions of its rehabilitation and manpower problems.

At the time of the invasion of North Africa, Sortino was a boatswain's mate, first class. He was with the forces at Fedala, and after the initial landing he was ordered to take one of several boats loaded with soldiers to Casablanca, about fifteen miles south along the coast line.

As they neared their objective, two enemy destroyers swept out of the darkness. They bore down on the boat which Sortino commanded and opened fire. The other landing craft in the column dispersed and escaped in the darkness.

Sortino's craft was trapped, however. The two destroyers came within thirty feet of it and, at that range, blasted it to smithereens. Many of the soldiers either drowned or were

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killed by gunfire. When Sortino came to, he found he had been blown clear of the boat by one explosion. His right arm was badly torn by shrapnel, so badly that he knew he would lose most of it, even if he lived. Still he clung to the shattered member as he floated in the chill water, buoyed up by his life jacket. That was all that buoyed him, however, for he said afterward that he prayed for death.

After about two hours in the water he realized he had the strength to live, and despite the prospect of having only one arm, life again began to seem desirable. It was in that frame of mind that he was picked up by a couple of French fishermen who rushed him ashore to a hospital. His ordeal was not over, however, thanks to the way in which the German Armistice Commission had stripped North Africa after the fall of France.

There was no anaesthetic left in the hospital and Sortino had to endure the amputation of his arm just above the elbow in full consciousness!

Two days later the Casablanca armistice was signed and Sortino was returned to the American forces who promptly shipped him back to the United States for hospitalization.

Frequently, in such cases, the wounded man goes back to civilian life, his military career over.

Sortino, however, chose a different course when he was finally released from the hospital. He took some leave first—long enough to marry the girl who had waited for his return—then he went back to duty with the Coast Guard.

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Before joining that service he had been in the cavalry, and therefore knew and loved horses. So it was a logical move to assign him to the newly established Coast Guard horse patrol for duty as an instructor. Loss of an arm doesn't interfere with his ability to teach new patrolmen how to ride and care for their mounts. Besides doing a useful job for his country in time of war, officials felt that the assignment would help convince Sortino that, despite his handicap, he could be a valuable member of society.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE PICKET FENCE

EARLY in the summer of 1942, when the U-boat blitz against America's coastal shipping was at its worst, a German submarine was cruising on a course that would have taken it directly into the path of an approaching convoy. As it happened, however, the sub never saw that convoy and the Nazi commander probably still is trying to puzzle out why, if by some unhappy chance he has not already been gathered unto his fathers.

The explanation is that the U-boat ran into the Coast Guard's "Picket Fence" without knowing it. The Nazi was not intended to know it, of course. Not even many Americans had been told about the "Picket Fence" at that time.

Actually what happened was this: One of the small boats which make up the "fence" detected the U-boat's presence. It was not equipped to fight the sub, nor could it radio its discovery to the approaching convoy. However, it had one other course, and took it. Putting on full speed, the little craft raced for the convoy, reached it ahead of the submarine, and the result was that the convoy altered course and escaped unscathed.

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On another occasion—this was in “maneuvers”—the Army Air Base at Westover, Massachusetts, planned a surprise “attack” on Philadelphia. The planes took off as scheduled and roared eastward over the Atlantic. Then they headed for Philadelphia, but their whole maneuver was unsuccessful for they were spotted and reported by four separate picket boats!

These are only two exploits of the so-called “Picket Fence.” There are others, but their telling will probably have to await the war’s end.

Construction of the “Picket Fence” was begun in those desperate days when United States beaches were coated with oil from the tankers torpedoed on our very doorstep, when great flares at sea marked the end of many of our merchantmen, some within sight of watchers ashore. Our ships were being sunk more rapidly than the burgeoning shipbuilding industry was turning out the replacements. Marine insurance rates soared to twenty-five percent.

In the midst of this black picture, the Navy came in for some sharp but not always well-informed criticism. Congressmen and columnists, about equally expert in naval matters, had a field day with the Navy. The burden of their criticism appeared to be that the Navy, asleep on the job, had not foreseen the seriousness of the U-boat menace, and even after it developed did not make full use of the available small boats to combat it. On the strength of this barrage of criticism, one organization of boatbuilders descended on the

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Navy with a plan for the construction of thousands of small boats—some thirty thousand, if memory serves.

Much could be said on both sides of the controversy, of course, starting with the fact that as late as April, 1940, after war had been raging in Europe for more than eight months, Congress refused to authorize a twenty-five-percent expansion in the conventional combat categories of the Fleet, deciding that an eleven-percent increase would be sufficient at that time. When it couldn't get ships like destroyers and cruisers, which it always could use, what chance had the Navy of winning Congressional approval for the hundreds of subchasers and escort craft which ultimately proved necessary? For, remember, the United States was not at war at that time and a demand for huge numbers of antisubmarine craft could only have been interpreted to mean that the Navy had predetermined that it was going to war.

Regardless of the merits of the controversy, the Navy yielded to the pressure to some extent and announced that, although it had been steadily acquiring privately owned vessels suitable for its purposes, another call had gone out to private boatowners for approximately a thousand additional small craft, the majority of which were to be turned over to the Coast Guard. Many of them ultimately found their way into the organization of patrol craft which came to be known as the "Picket Fence."

Under the jurisdiction of the Navy's Eastern Sea Frontier, the duties of the boats in the "Picket Fence" were limited

## THE PICKET FENCE

primarily to observation and rescue and they work out of more than thirty Coastal Picket Bases located along the Eastern seaboard, each under the command of a Coast Guard officer.

These craft, which include many sailing vessels—famous Bermuda racers such as the *Edlu*, *Winfred* and *Sea Gypsy* and the equally well-known Gloucester fisherman, the *Gertrude L. Thebaud*, are among them—may be compared to hundreds of eyes and ears all along our Atlantic Coast watching and listening for signs of enemy action. It is just as though an additional line of lighthouses and lifesaving stations had been established ten or twenty miles offshore.

The sailing craft, which make up a subdivision known as the Corsair Fleet, are reminiscent of the Coast Guard's earliest ships and like those predecessors—the *Massachusetts* and the *Scammell*, for example—the Corsairs are based in New England ports such as Gloucester and Greenport, although some also operate out of Norfolk.

In antisubmarine work they have certain advantages peculiar to them alone. Their ability to move noiselessly through the water so that a submarine may start to surface almost alongside with no suspicion that an enemy is near by is one priceless advantage. On the other hand, sailing vessels, not bothered by any noises of their own, have a greater sensitivity in listening for U-boats. In general, also, they have a greater cruising radius and can stand heavier weather than motor vessels of equal size.

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The routine of the motor yachts, former swordfishermen and pleasure craft alike, is similar to that of the Corsairs except that they are not sent far offshore nor do they stay out as long as the schooners. Generally speaking, an attempt is made to assign both types to home waters where their crews will be familiar with local conditions, but whenever the need arises—such as an increase in U-boat activity in any other area—the “Picket Fence” craft are promptly dispatched to the danger zones.

One graphic example of that versatility was provided when fresh-water sailors from the Great Lakes were sent to the aid of their salt-water brethren. More than seventy powerful motorboats made the trip through the Erie Canal to the Eastern Seaboard or down the Mississippi to the Gulf.

All manner of men make up the crews of the boats in the “Picket Fence.” Bankers and brokers, fishermen and yachtsmen, schoolteachers and factory workers. There’s a former Congressman from Connecticut—Edward W. Goss—serving as the chief boatswain’s mate skipper of a little vessel operating out of Charleston. Larry O’Toole, a roving artist hailing from Boston’s T-Wharf, is now a ship’s cook, second class, aboard one of the schooners out of Gloucester. Accountants are doing their figuring on maneuvering boards. Automobile mechanics find themselves tinkering with boat engines.

Life in the “Picket Fence” is far, far from being all beer and skittles. Because of the physical beating the crews take





*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

### GUARDING THE NATION'S SHORELINE

U. S. Coast Guard mounted beach patrol on the West Coast.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

### COMING HOME IN THE DAWN

U. S. Coast Guardsmen return from a night patrol.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### COAST GUARD DOG PATROL

On a lonely Atlantic outpost a Coast Guardsman and his alert canine partner peek over a sand dune as they check on a strange movement down the beach. On antisaboteur patrols over isolated stretches of the coast line the Coast Guard Dog Patrol is of immeasurable assistance to the Coast Guard.

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in their small craft, few of them being over eighty-three feet long, it ranks as one of the toughest assignments in the entire service.

Take the case of the CGR 3070 for example. It not only shows the hardships which the men of the Inshore Patrol have to contend with in dirty weather, but also goes a long way toward proving the Navy's point that just because a boat has a hull and an engine, it is not necessarily a good antisubmarine craft.

Before the CGR 3070 became a Coast Guard craft, she was the yacht *Zaida*, a trim fifty-eight-foot yawl belonging to the late George E. Ratsey, the famous sailmaker, who built her for racing.

On December 3, 1942, she was hove to off the East Coast riding out a gale. That was bad enough, for although she was sturdily built and mannerly enough, she was not designed for that rough stuff. Then the hurricane struck her! It rolled her right on her beam ends and for a sickening minute her masts dipped into the ocean. Two men on her deck saved themselves only by grabbing life lines and hanging on until they thought their arms would pull out of their sockets.

Slowly the yacht righted herself, for haven't we said she was mannerly? Then she rolled the other way. This was too much. Her tall, shapely mizzenmast carried away with a crack like a rifle shot.

Below decks pandemonium reigned. The once orderly

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cabin was a shambles. Clothing, men and all sorts of gear were hurled around like matchwood. A potbellied stove was ripped loose from its base, slithered across the cabin and caved in a couple of Seaman James T. Watson's ribs.

To the other five men below decks, it must have seemed as though the end had come for all hands. Even after the little ship got up off her beam ends, she still careened drunkenly around the ocean, completely at the mercy of the hurricane. Fifty-pound hunks of lead ballast also slipped their moorings and added to the general peril by slamming around the little cabin.

Curtis Arnall, who played the part of Buck Rogers in a radio production before enlisting in the Coast Guard, was skipper of the yacht. When the hurricane hit, he was swept from the cabin to the galley by the wall of green water which poured through her hatch as she went over.

Nothing in the average landsman's experience is comparable to what happened to the *3070* and her crew. With her mainmast gone, it was impossible to sail her and the auxiliary engine was useless. Even had they been able to get canvas on her, it is doubtful if the men could have handled her in such weather, for although her skipper was quite a well-known yachtsman, none of the crew had been more than a few months in the service.

After the first impact of the hurricane, when they had had a chance to survey their plight, the men decided to call for help. Their radio telephone was petering out, however, and

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they had scant hope that their distress signal had been heard. In any event, they spent the first night tossing about the mountainous surface of the ocean, with their little ship hopelessly out of control.

The men managed to get the injured seaman lashed into a bunk where he lay chewing aspirin in an effort to quiet the knifing pain from his broken ribs. They also tried to get the loose gear in the cabin stowed away again and set about bailing out the water which had poured below decks when the ship heeled over on her side. There wasn't much more they could do—except hang on in what they all knew was a fight for life, with the odds against them.

When the hurricane first struck, the 3070 was off Nantucket. After the first night of terror, dawn found them somewhere off Cape Cod, and about noon a British destroyer located them just off the Cape's tip. The sea still was running much too high to attempt to take anyone off. Even if the yacht had been under control, a trip in a bosun's chair under such conditions would have been suicidal.

However, the destroyer managed after considerable difficulty to get a line aboard the 3070 and took her in tow, headed for Halifax. The feelings of her officers and men can only be imagined. The yawning jaws of death had receded a bit. Perhaps they weren't finally doomed to watery graves after all.

Their troubles were far from over, however. The wind continued to batter them and once, while Seaman Toivo

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Koskinen was forward trying to rig a chafing gear on the towline, a wave swept him overboard. With miraculous good luck another wave tossed him right back on deck and a shipmate grabbed him.

Sometime during the night, as the two blacked-out ships wallowed northward through the storm, the towline snapped. Once more the 3070 was at the mercy of the elements. The destroyer was nowhere in sight when the next dawn broke.

For days they drifted, pounded by one storm after another. Fifty-foot waves crashed down upon them in terrifying demonstrations of the relentless power of the sea. Practically everything aboard was saturated with salt. It got into the drinking water, soaked their clothing and even their cigarettes. The crew met the latter emergency at least partially by smoking tea, and sometimes coffee, rolled in pages from the *Bluejacket's Manual*.

Meanwhile, would-be rescuers scoured the storm-tossed ocean wastes for the helpless craft. For all they knew, however, their search was just so much wasted effort. As far as they could tell, the sea already had claimed the CGR 3070. Nevertheless, the search went on and, at last, on December 9, a faint wireless voice was heard from the missing Corsair. But no position was given before the signal faded, and even as the search was pressed with renewed vigor, another hurricane hammered the New England coast.

Another week went by and then a Flying Fortress spotted

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the incredible little ship off Nags Head, North Carolina. What torment her crew had endured in the interim, no one knew. Their food supplies long since had passed the danger point. Probably, too, her exhausted crew had ceased to care.

The Fortress dropped a sack of food on a parachute, but the cruel ill fortune which had been dogging the 3070 still seemed to be dominant, for the sack burst when it hit the water!

And then, before rescue boats could be directed to the spot, still another storm roared along the Atlantic coast and blotted the 3070 from sight again.

As soon as the weather moderated sufficiently to permit the aerial hunt to be resumed—and it doesn't have to be very good weather before Coast Guard and Navy fliers will go out—the search was on again. Another five days elapsed without a sight of the ill-starred *Zaida*. Finally, two days before Christmas, a Coast Guard cutter spied her twenty-five miles off Ocracoke Inlet, North Carolina—and then she was swallowed up in a rain squall.

This will-o'-the-wisp performance was almost unbelievable, but it was not destined to continue much longer, for later that day a patrol blimp located the 3070 and, this time, managed to keep her in view until two patrol boats got alongside. They found her crew still aboard, and except for Watson, not seriously injured. All of them were bruised and battered by their twenty-one-day ordeal, however. All

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were unshaven and close to exhaustion from lack of food and sleep.

They were transferred to the rescue ships, taken ashore and later flown to New York for treatment. A relief crew was placed aboard the 3070 and she was finally brought into Ocracoke, having traversed some 3,100 miles since the first hurricane hit her. Which, even if unintentional, is pretty good traveling for a sailing craft.

As the much-sought little ship—she was the object of one of the greatest organized maritime hunts in history—came into port that day, at least one of the Coast Guardsmen who watched her was destined to be a victim of a similar though less protracted ordeal about ten months later. He was twenty-three-year-old Francis Donaldson, soundman second class, who was assigned to the patrol craft *Wilcox* which foundered on her maiden Coast Guard voyage not far from where the *Zaida* was picked up.

The *Wilcox* was an old menhaden fishing vessel when the Coast Guard got hold of her. She had a wooden hull and a squat superstructure that made her look like an inland ferry-boat. The Coast Guard did a lot of work on her, overhauled her from truck to keelson, spent nine months and considerable money on the job. They even put some of the latest-type sound-detection gear aboard her. Young Donaldson said it was one of the best sets he had ever worked with.

Finally, one day in September, she was pronounced ready for sea and her skipper, Lieutenant (j.g.) Elliott P. Smyzer,



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USCG, was ordered to take her to her new Atlantic coast base. Even before she got out into open water trouble developed in the engine room but it was not recognized as an evil portent apparently—and even if it had been, those things don't count in wartime, especially in the Coast Guard. So as soon as the repairs had been effected, the engine room called the bridge and reported the ship was ready to proceed.

The wind was rising as the *Wilcox* headed out but they had a following sea and Smyzer thought they would be all right. He began to have his doubts, however, when he found the ship rolling as much as thirty degrees. At that, she hadn't begun to show what she really could do!

Smyzer had had three years' service in the Navy during World War I and was in the Merchant Marine after that, but only about seven or eight of the thirty-odd men in his crew had ever been to sea before. As a result of the rapid and tremendous expansion of both the Navy and the Coast Guard, you can find similar situations on a great many ships these days. Fortunately, they don't all run into such hard luck on their first cruises.

Throughout the first day, the wind continued to rise and the seas climbed steadily higher. Waves were running as high as fifty feet. Darkness closed in and although the *Wilcox* was taking a terrific pounding, she still was under control. Smyzer thought they would be able to ride out the storm.

During the night, however, they were forced to stop two

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or three times because of trouble with the main bilge pump. In those intervals when the engine was shut down, the little ship rolled sickeningly. A couple of times she heeled over as much as seventy-five degrees.

"It seemed as if she must surely go over," Smyzer reported, "but she righted herself and I knew that if she didn't go over in seas like that, she would stay afloat."

As events proved, he was too optimistic, but that was not because the *Wilcox* capsized.

Sometime between 4:30 A.M. and 5:00 A.M., Lieutenant (j.g.) Trickey, the engineering officer, mounted the bridge and told Smyzer he was having serious trouble below but that, if he could get the auxiliary bilge pump running, they would be able to hold their own. In a little while he did manage to get the auxiliary going but the respite was short-lived.

"Captain, we've got to get to port," the engineer called through the voice tube. "Something has gone wrong and we're taking water so fast that I can't keep ahead of it. Can we put into port somewhere along here?"

The "something" that had gone wrong was that the *Wilcox's* seams had begun opening up and no amount of pumping was going to suffice. At first, however, the crew didn't realize just what had happened.

"I knew that there was no port we could reach," Smyzer related, "but I thought if we changed our course and headed directly to the beach the waves would not be so severe when

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we got in far enough, and we could swing the ship around, just keeping enough headway on her so that we wouldn't be beached.

"I didn't want to run up on any rocks, and I didn't know precisely what the condition of the beach along there was."

The situation was desperate and Smyzer knew it only too well. And although, like any good skipper, he probably wanted fiercely to save his ship, the safety of his crew was uppermost in his mind. He sent for his chief radioman.

"Skipper, are you going to send an S.O.S.?" the latter asked as he stepped into the chartroom.

"Yes," said Smyzer.

But as they stood at the chart table while the captain wrote out the message, the lights went out. The last generator had quit.

Immediately the radioman hooked up the portable transmitter and for the next hour he sat at the key, pounding out the distress signal. The range of the portable equipment was such, however, that he knew there was scant chance of its being heard by anyone.

Meanwhile, down in the cramped engine room Trickey had organized a bucket brigade, recruiting all available hands regardless of their regular posts. He said he thought they probably were good for another four hours, but there was not much conviction in his voice when he said it. And just when Smyzer figured the four hours would give them time to reach the beach, the main engine quit again.

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Once more Trickey got it going and the captain tried changing course to ease the pounding on his ship—first due west, then northwest and back to west again. Mountainous waves of angry green water hammered at them. More and more of them were coming right over the bow and racing along the deck.

"Captain," reported Trickey, "every wave we take aboard is just flooding us out."

Smyzer merely shook his head.

Shortly after daylight, a strange thing happened. One of Mother Carey's chickens, a small sea bird, fluttered to rest on the *Wilcox's* fantail and there it stayed.

"We're done for," said Trickey when he saw the bird. "That's a bad omen—the worst thing that can happen to a ship!"

About 8:00 A.M., the ship had its first personnel tragedy. Two members of the crew were up forward when a great wave struck. One of them heard it hit.

"Hang on!" he yelled. At the same time he threw his legs around the other's body in a scissors grip. But his effort was vain. The wall of green water struck them and tore them apart. The second man grabbed frantically, tore his would-be rescuer's cheek like so much tissue paper. Then he disappeared.

"Man overboard!" the shout went up.

A full gale was blowing by that time. Nevertheless, Smy-

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zer stopped the ship while a life ring was hurled after the unfortunate seaman. A cruel decision faced the captain, one which probably will wake him up sweating in the middle of the night for years to come. The man who had gone over the side was Harry Stephens Dennis of Bogota, New Jersey. He had a wife and child at home.

Smyzer knew, however, that he had thirty-four enlisted men and three other officers still aboard to think about. He knew, too, that if he tried to swing his already water-logged ship in that storm, she would turn turtle and all hands would be lost.

"I decided to proceed toward the beach," he reported simply.

It was a case of the greatest good of the greatest number and certainly no one will question the decision the captain so reluctantly made, least of all the other members of his crew.

At that time the *Wilcox* was making about two-thirds her normal speed, but in a few minutes Trickey notified the captain he could give him a full 350 revolutions per minute. Again Smyzer had hopes of getting the ship closer to the beach, only to have them dashed in less than half an hour when the main engine went completely dead.

Throughout this grueling period, the ship's young and inexperienced crew had performed like old-timers. Most of them were horribly seasick from lack of food and the vio-

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lent tossing of the ship but young Donaldson, a "veteran" of almost two years' service, much of it in the Iceland area, declared he never heard a whimper out of any of them.

In fact, there was even some effort at gaiety. While the bucket brigade strove to keep the water down in the engine room, Trickey got out the wardroom phonograph and started playing the entire collection of records. As each number finished, he would take it off and carefully skim it into the ocean with the grim remark:

"Well, I guess we won't be wanting that again."

Somewhere along the line a practical citizen among the enlisted men decided that since they were going to have to abandon ship sooner or later, he wanted to go over the side in his best suit of dress blues. So he fought his way to his locker and stripped off his dungarees.

"Dungarees is cheaper than blues," he explained. "Besides, when we get picked up, they'll probably give us some leave an' I don't want to have to sit around no barracks waiting for a suit of blues!"

Before long the whole crew had followed his example.

Throughout the day Smyzer kept the bucket brigade going, the crew working in two shifts. Truly it was a battle of men against the sea, and slowly but inexorably the men were losing. They knew it, but there was no panic. Black despair seized many of the youngsters, however, at one point.

In the midst of their bailing efforts, an electrifying shout went up from the fantail:

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“Ship astern!”

Sure enough, through the murk they could see the outlines of a good-sized craft. Some later identified it as an LST. It seemed to be heading in their direction and Smyzer said he thought that their feeble distress signals must have been picked up after all.

“As he approached he changed course and went over a way to our port,” the captain related, “and then he changed course again to run apparently parallel to our position.

“I had a distress signal hoisted and we fired some rockets. We fired our 20-millimeter gun, the magazines of which contained a good many tracers that I thought could be seen. We were not able to use our big blinker because the power was gone, but we had a portable light that we got topsides and the quartermaster signaled him and got a reply. We explained the precarious position we were in and asked for help.”

The newcomer lay to for a few minutes, but they couldn't get a definite response out of him, couldn't tell whether their message had been understood or not. Whatever the explanation, the men of the *Wilcox* had the dismaying experience of seeing their one hope of rescue turn away from them and disappear over the horizon.

It may have been that the LST was having all it could handle to keep itself afloat in those seas, for the big landing craft are notoriously poor sailors. Her crew may have feared that they'd be running into some kind of a Nazi trap if

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they responded to the appeal for help. Most likely, though, they just didn't understand the signals from the *Wilcox*.

"The morale of my crew dropped to nothing," Smyzer said, describing the effect of their apparent abandonment. "I heard remarks such as 'What's the use, we're licked.'"

It was his move, he knew. He had decided earlier to put off abandoning ship until the last possible moment because he felt that the men couldn't live on a raft in those seas. He called all hands topsides and those who could crowded into his cabin, the others pressing close to the doorway.

"Boys," he began slowly, "we are not going to give up hope. You are all cold and wet the same as I am, but you must have faith. We are going to pull through this. You are going to do exactly what I tell you. It will be tough, but we are going to fight this thing out until the seas go down to such an extent that I feel it will be comparatively safe for you to ride the rafts. Not one man goes over the side on a raft until I give the word."

His words had the desired effect, for all hands went back to their tasks. The struggle against the water rising in the engine room grew steadily more difficult, for the men not only were working without food but they had no drinking water because there was no power to operate the pumps.

They managed, nevertheless, to keep the bucket brigade going, working in half-hour shifts. Repeatedly the youngsters would have to drop out momentarily when their sea-



## THE PICKET FENCE

sickness forced them to make a beeline for the rail. But always they staggered back to the bucket brigade.

At 10:20 P.M., the seas were breaking over the *Wilcox's* stern, she was so low in the water. It was then only a question of time before she would founder, for already a dangerous port list had developed. Smyzer passed the word for everyone to clear out of the engine room and stand by to abandon ship.

Meanwhile, the chief boatswain's mate had been tying the rafts together, checking their equipment and rations. When everything possible had been done, he began firing the last of their rockets. One after another they traced a fiery path into the inky sky, then cascaded varicolored balls of fire seaward.

At 10:30, when they had been fighting their losing battle against the sea for almost twenty-eight hours, Smyzer ordered the rafts on the port side to be lowered away and the men assigned to them to follow them into the sea. A couple of minutes later, the process was repeated on the starboard side. "I can't jump," faltered one youngster, clutching the rail.

"Better do it," called another. "You're going to get wet anyway."

Smyzer and Trickey almost went down with the ship when they made an effort to get the dinghy into the water after all the rafts had left. It had been lashed down, how-

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ever, after having once been made ready for launching, and they were unable to free it.

"Get over the side as fast as you can," Smyzer directed the engineer. "In another minute she's going down."

Smyzer said he had a difficult time getting away from the sinking ship because of the suction she was creating, but he succeeded in fighting his way around the stern. In the distance he could make out one string of rafts and at once struck out for them. He found, however, that he had injured his left arm during the day and it was of little use. Fortunately, he bumped into a ladder in the darkness and was able to haul himself onto it. His efforts to paddle toward the rafts with one hand were a dismal failure, so he dropped into the water and began swimming again.

When a few minutes later he found he had made little headway and bumped into the ladder again, he figured he was meant to use it, so he climbed back and spent the ensuing seventeen hours trying to stay on it. Repeatedly he lost the fight.

Luckily for all hands, the *Wilcox* had gone down in the Gulf Stream and the water was comparatively warm.

"The sharks were right bad," said Donaldson. "They had me worried for a while, because I had always heard they liked white meat and my bare feet were shining in that clear Gulf Stream water like a pair of headlights. I sure wished I had kept my shoes on."

The men quickly found that they could not expect the

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rafts to support them if they clambered aboard. The best they could do was secure themselves to the life lines along the sides. One or two men could get onto the raft and row.

"Only one of the eight guys around our raft had a knife," Donaldson said, "so he was elected to get up on the raft and dish out the rations."

Small quantities of drinking water and food were available for all those at the rafts. Smyzer, on his ladder, had no such luck.

During the day the weather had begun to moderate somewhat and Donaldson, who, by the way, was the son of William J. (Bill) Donaldson, superintendent of the House Press Gallery in Washington, told feelingly of how the little group of wretched men watched a convoy steaming past on the horizon. They had no means of attracting its attention and, the men on the ships could not see the rafts or their occupants at that distance.

Later a blimp soared overhead, but it too missed them so far as the men in the water could tell. They were wrong, however, for Ensign Harry Cook of St. Petersburg, Florida, the copilot who was at the rudder at the time, spotted an object floating in the water. Nosing down to investigate, the object was identified as a life raft. Just then a green flare went up from the raft.

By this time, a PC boat which had been escorting the convoy that Donaldson and his erstwhile shipmates had watched disappear, came into view in response to a message from the

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blimp. The latter then cruised in the area, locating three other rafts, and in about two hours the surface craft had completed the rescue.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the whole affair was that not a soul was lost in the actual sinking. It certainly is a tribute to the discipline which Smyzer was able to maintain as well as to the manner in which the crew, inexperienced though they were, performed under soul-trying conditions.

Out of the ordeal young Donaldson brought one recommendation—Navy life jackets should be some bright color instead of the battle blue they now are painted.

"When we got aboard the rescue ship," he said, "they told us that, when they first sighted us, they thought we were porpoises. We were splashing around and waving our arms, but our jackets just blended in with the color of the water."

Of course the Navy well knows that yellow is the color that can be seen best at sea or from the air, but in choosing the blue color for life jackets, the same as the hulls of its ships, the Navy had to decide whether the rescue factor was sufficiently important to warrant destroying the camouflage of its ships, for naturally the crew has to wear life jackets all the time they are on deck while at sea. In the case of cruisers, for instance, this would mean that possibly a couple of hundred spots of bright yellow, should that color be substituted, would be running around topsides, making beautiful targets for strafing planes.

## CHAPTER TEN

### SEARCH FOR SAFETY

A KNOT of haggard-looking men sat on the edges of their bunks in a Navy barracks at an eastern seaport one day early in 1942. They wore new dungarees but they were unshaven and some were noticeably jumpy. Their nervousness was understandable, however, for they were the survivors of the crew of an American merchantman which had been torpedoed literally on Uncle Sam's front doorstep.

An officer with the gold shield of the Coast Guard above his rank stripes was questioning them and noting their answers carefully on a long, printed form.

After the usual questions as to the name and size of the ship, her cargo and destination, the officer wanted to know such things as whether the enemy was sighted and when, where the torpedo hit, the immediate effect of the blast and how long the ship stayed afloat after she was abandoned. He also queried them closely concerning the lifesaving gear carried and how it performed.

"How many lifeboats and rafts did you carry?"

"Did you use the boats or the rafts?"

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“Have you any recommendations or criticisms?”

Similar scenes were repeated many times in the months that followed as Admiral Karl Doenitz's U-boat blitz increased in ferocity. And in the early months the answers to the Coast Guard's questions were tragically similar. The lifeboats could not be lowered because the torpedo explosion had damaged the lowering gear, or else the boats were swamped by inexperienced personnel.

One glaringly apparent fact which emerged from the interrogations was that untrained or ill-trained crews aboard American merchant ships were the cause of appallingly high losses of life.

Gradually, however, the questioning of survivors by officers of the Coast Guard's Merchant Marine Inspection Service was developing a composite picture of what happens when one or more “tin fish” enter the vitals of the average cargo ship or tanker. The faults in equipment and personnel showed up unmistakably, and steadily the Coast Guard hammered away at the job of rectifying the errors.

As the beginning of the third year of America's participation in the war approached, theretofore secret statistics on what had been accomplished were released. For example, in January of 1942 the average loss of life per ship attacked was 34.6 percent of those aboard dry cargo ships and 42 percent of those on tankers. In September 1943 the losses had dropped to 2.1 percent on the last 15 dry cargo ships attacked, with no losses at all on six of them, and to 7.3 percent on the last

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15 tankers attacked. Likewise, on ten of the tankers there was not a life lost!

How was the transformation accomplished? Certainly no single factor deserves the whole credit, but one which probably rates the lion's share is training. Because, obviously, even the best of equipment will not necessarily enable an untrained crew to make an orderly abandonment of a ship, whereas a crew that knows how to use whatever equipment it has stands a much better chance of survival.

This was made terrifyingly clear in the case of two ships which went down in the North Atlantic with very heavy losses. Before they sailed, the records show that the examining officers criticized the state of the crews' training and their lack of familiarity with the lifesaving gear.

When the torpedoes hit, the very thing feared by the examining officers happened.

The first men to reach the boats began lowering away. Then, without regard to the boats' capacity, other panicky passengers and crew members began swarming down the life lines. The sea was rough and boat after boat capsized, hurling the occupants into the water, some to be crushed between the boat and the hull of the ship and others to perish in the icy water.

Many of those who either jumped or were thrown into the water owe their lives to one of the earliest safety requirements set up by the Coast Guard after it took over the duties of the Commerce Department's Steamboat Inspection Serv-

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ice on March 1, 1942. This was that life jackets be provided with small, waterproof electric lights with red bulbs which the seamen may turn on to guide rescuers to them. When the water is so cold that men can live only a matter of minutes, the importance of being quickly located can readily be seen.

As with many other wartime safety measures, the Coast Guard had the experience of the British and other maritime nations to draw on in working out standards for the lights. The red bulb was decided on, for example, because life rafts already were equipped with white electric lights which turn on as soon as the raft hits the water. Therefore, in order that rescue boats would not waste precious minutes by going after survivors who already were on rafts, the lights for the jackets were equipped with the distinguishing red bulbs.

"We still get criticism of those red bulbs, however," one officer said, "from people who feel that the red light can't be seen far enough. They think it ought to be white or yellow. It seems to me, though, that regardless of the color, the light is valuable only if rescue boats are close enough to reach the swimmers in a few minutes and, in such cases, elimination of all possible confusion is the desirable thing."

The majority of the Coast Guard's wartime safety measures are based on careful analysis of the experiences and recommendations of a large number of survivors, but a few of them can be traced to individual occurrences.

One group of seamen, for instance, came ashore after a



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protracted period in a lifeboat and it was discovered they had been overlooked repeatedly by patrol planes.

"We could see the PBY's [Navy flying boats] go by," they related, "but we were unable to attract their attention."

Finally one of them hit on an idea. Taking the bottom of a tin ration can, he fastened it to the blade of an oar and used it to flash the sun's rays back at the planes. This crude heliograph proved effective, too, and soon thereafter the Coast Guard made it mandatory for all lifeboats to be equipped with polished steel signaling mirrors. They are somewhat more elaborate, of course, than the piece of tin can fastened to an oar blade, and each mirror is accompanied by simple instructions for sighting it so as to give the maximum chance of the signal being seen.

Early in the war the British found that one of the primary needs aboard merchant ships operating in combat zones was for plenty of life rafts which could be dropped into the sea speedily and without any complex lowering machinery. Experience of the most bitter kind showed only too clearly that lifeboats, especially wooden ones, were often rendered unusable by the explosion of a torpedo, either as a result of damage to the boat itself or to some part of the launching mechanism.

Slip rafts seemed to be the answer. Secured to the ship's stays, they could be dropped into the sea by the simple means of pulling a lanyard, and the crew could swim to them after jumping overboard. This, of course, is not as comfortable

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as being lowered over the side in a nice dry lifeboat, but with ships going down in less than ten minutes, sometimes even in a matter of seconds, the sailors quickly learned they could not be choosy.

Despite the obvious lessons to be gained from the experience of the British, the Dutch and the Scandinavian ships in the early months of the conflict, the majority of American merchantmen were inadequately equipped when war finally came to the United States. It took disasters such as the sinking of the S.S. *City of Atlanta*, one of the first victims of Grand Admiral Doenitz's blitz against our coastal shipping, to spotlight the needs completely.

In the *City of Atlanta's* case, the ship rolled on her side almost immediately after the torpedo hit. This carried the lifeboats on the low side under water at once, and those on the upper side could not be launched because their davits were of the gravity type and there was no way to lift them clear of the ship in that position.

The only three persons who survived were those who managed to *get onto some wreckage in the water*. Obviously, had there been rafts or floats available, other lives probably would have been saved because there were eighteen or twenty persons in the water wearing life preservers, but they perished before they could be got out of the water.

To a certain extent the loss of life on American merchant ships might be considered in the nature of chickens coming home to roost because the bulk of those ships were virtually

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worn-out veterans of World War I which lacked up-to-date lifesaving gear and whose watertight integrity was not precisely irreproachable. However, that is only a partial answer. U-boats of today are infinitely more deadly and efficient weapons than their 1914-1918 predecessors; their torpedoes are much more powerful, capable of sinking ships in a matter of minutes. In World War I, by contrast, crew members who were not killed outright by the torpedo explosions usually had ample time to get lifeboats away before their ships sank. Very frequently, too, the subs gave sufficient warning to enable them to take to the boats even before the torpedoes were fired. No such practice prevails today.

When the Coast Guard took over the job of helping merchant crews protect themselves from the results of torpedo attacks, it did two things to put the system on a practical basis. It instituted the practice of interviewing all available survivors of ship sinkings to learn as much as possible about what happens in such cases and to get firsthand recommendations for safety measures and equipment.

Then it brought into the service as commissioned officers—many of them with the rank of commander—veteran merchant skippers who had had their ships torpedoed under them. These men were assigned as examining officers for the Marine Inspection Service and given the job of seeing to it, as far as possible, that every ship which sailed in convoy had at least the minimum of lifesaving gear aboard and that the crews were familiar with its purpose and operation.

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If there is anything that a merchant sailor hates it's the idea of regimentation. That's why he's a merchant sailor and not in the Navy. Consequently, attempts to get the old-timers to engage in lifeboat or fire-drill in peacetime was just about impossible. After the first few sinkings, however, that was all changed.

Repeatedly survivors of torpedoings testified that lack of training in the use of the available lifesaving gear caused many deaths and they urged more and more drills. Like that patent medicine we are told the children cry for, the seamen frequently ask that such drills be held before they put to sea. Captain H. C. Shepheard, USCGR, tall, rugged director of the inspection service, says that almost invariably the requests come from the old-timers, especially those who have been through a torpedoing or two. Such men realize only too well how vitally important it is that every member of the crew know exactly how to operate the lifeboat davits, where the releasing levers are located in the boats, and sundry other details that they won't have time to learn after the "tin fish" hits.

Take the matter of releasing levers, for example. There are several patented varieties and each is located in a different part of the lifeboat. One, for instance, will be a metal ring in the bow of the boat while another may be a long lever located under a thwart in the middle of the boat. If a seaman has been trained to operate the first type, he will be completely at a loss on a dark night to release the boat from

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the davits if it happens to be equipped with the second type.

To a landlubber this may not seem a very important item but seamen will tell you that it often spells the difference between life and death. Many a lifeboat has been swamped and its occupants hurled to their deaths because the releasing gear did not work, or was not operated properly. Such accidents often happen if the ship still is under way when the lifeboats hit the water. At such times it is vitally important that they be released from the davits as soon as they are water-borne. Otherwise the forward motion of the ship will most likely drag the bow of the lifeboat under water.

As the new merchant ships, the Liberties and Victories, came off the ways, the Coast Guard struggled to have such important items of equipment standardized. In the meantime, and for the older ships on which standardization is not possible, the Coast Guard is concentrating on training and frequent drills.

In peacetime, shipowners are in the business for profit and they look at every recommendation for additional equipment with a coldly calculating eye. Knowing that attitude, the Coast Guard was instrumental in getting the government to adopt the policy of having the War Shipping Administration assume the cost of all wartime safety measures that might be recommended or required as the need developed. This insured the minimum of delay in getting the necessary equipment installed.

In the case of rafts, improvisations had to suffice at the

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outset in order that the all too small number of ships would not be tied up unduly long while better models were developed. So the early type of slip raft was little more than a sturdy crate with flotation tanks rigged in each end. Equipment stowed aboard it was held to the absolute minimum and there was no shelter of any kind provided. As a result, many seamen who were forced to spend protracted periods clinging to them suffered cruelly.

Gradually improvements were made and the latest approved type of raft is an elaborate affair indeed. All metal, it does not deteriorate from exposure to the weather on the ship's deck and is designed with sufficient strength so that it can safely be dropped into the sea at practically any angle from a height of fifty or sixty feet. In watertight compartments it carries at least as much equipment as would be found in a lifeboat, such as blankets in waterproof containers, a mast and sail, canvas which can be rigged as spray guards and tents. The latter serve not only as shelter from storms but enable the occupants to escape the serious sunburns which proved torture for many torpedoed victims.

Early in 1943 one of the year's most widely circulated books came off the presses, but it got no notice from the reviewers, neither criticism nor acclaim. It wasn't even offered for sale. Nevertheless, its first printing was 35,000 copies and it went to its readers with the unusual distinction of possibly becoming for them second only to food and water as an essential to life. In many respects it was a defensive

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weapon that may well prove the means of saving hundreds of lives before the war is over.

This unusual book was the work of the Coast Guard's Marine Inspection Section, containing the carefully distilled results of the scores of interviews the Section's officers had had with American, British, Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian and other United Nations seamen who had survived the destruction of their ships by Axis submarines.

The stories with which these men returned to United States shores were not pleasant, and the details of many of them remained in the Coast Guard's confidential files, but all of them, built around the hard core of a tough fight for life, had in them lessons which fairly cried out for recognition by the youngsters who flocked from farm and factory to the decks and engine rooms of America's growing fleet of merchant ships in answer to Hitler's challenge. It was for those youngsters, as well as for the older seamen who also had much to learn about the hard ways of war, that the book was prepared.

Many who scan its pages will see only the matter-of-fact regulations and recommendations for the promotion of safety at sea, but between the lines are the grim stories of the men on whose experiences the book was based. In plain, unvarnished language, the seamen told how they stayed alive for as long as two months when their supplies of water, biscuit and pemmican were exhausted, their nerves frayed and their bodies burned or frozen. More than that, they told of

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the heights of ingenuity to which the human mind will rise in the face of the final test for survival or death. All this and more was the essence of the unpretentious, blue paper-covered book. It was distributed to every operator, every officer and every member of the crews of American merchant ships.

Probably none of the stories told by the rescued seamen may be classed as deathless prose, but in the terse language of the sea many of them portray clearer pictures of the ordeals suffered by men adrift than the ablest fictionist could convey. One such, printed in the earlier editions of the Marine Inspection Section's book, was Kaare Karstaad's account of how nine Norwegian seamen sustained themselves for forty-eight days while drifting over almost a thousand miles of the Atlantic. His passage on the turtle, for example, is starkly realistic.

"Turtles swim around on moonlit nights," he wrote, "and the occupants of a raft should keep quiet and not move around, because the turtle is curious and will come to see what it is. When it gets near the raft, you can grab it by its legs . . . and turn it over on its back. Then it will be powerless.

"We lashed them down on their backs till daylight. When daylight came, we killed the turtle by knocking it on the head and utilized blood by using a long chisel, sticking it into the turtle's breast between the forelegs. The heart is at





*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### ETERNAL VIGILANCE

Great cities or lonely outposts—it makes no difference to the men of the U. S. Coast Guard as they maintain constant vigil protecting lives and property vital to our war effort.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

### NO SMOKING—DEFINITELY

U. S. Coast Guardsmen stand on the alert with fire extinguishers as the hold of a merchant ship is loaded with 1,000-pound aerial bombs. The Coast Guard's Port Security Detail takes every precaution to see that the explosive "eggs" are safely and properly loaded for the trip that will end with concussion in Axis-land.

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about the middle of the backbone. The thrust will make the blood come out like a fountain. Catch blood in a glass and drink it right away. For those who are not so fond of blood, it should be noted that it makes no difference whether you take one mouthful or a whole glass. The same taste is left in the mouth. The blood is cold and refreshing but has a typical blood taste.

"As soon as you drink the blood, you take off the bottom shell and open it up in the middle. Get rid of the stomach. Take out liver and eat it at once. If it is kept any length of time it will get sour and become poisonous. Don't eat the kidneys at all.

"When you are opening the turtle, you will see in the body cavity a fluid between the different parts that looks like bouillon or consommé. You can drink this fluid. It is delicious and not extremely fishy. You should eat a good portion of the meat from the neck and legs while it is still fresh and raw. It looks like fresh chicken meat and does not taste at all fishy unless the fat gets into it; then it turns bitter. The back legs are good, too. . . ."

Although with perhaps less intimate detail, the book tells the seamen how to do many things that may help them prolong life—messages of hope and inspiration.

On the matter of drinking water and substitute fluids, for instance, the book is quite expansive. Methods of catching rain water and squeezing potable fluids from the flesh of

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fish are explained in detail. For the Coast Guard knows only too well how all-important it is for men at sea to have drinking water.

In peacetime, when survivors of ship sinkings could reasonably expect rescue in a matter of hours, one quart of water per person was deemed adequate to keep stored in lifeboats. In wartime, however, when men stayed adrift for weeks, even months, the minimum was increased to ten quarts per person. Nothing is more feared by the men in charge of the sea safety program than the tendency of shipwrecked mariners, adrift for longer than their water rations will last, to turn to the sea water all around them to slake their burning thirst. The high sodium and magnesium content of sea water is invariably fatal to the drinker in a very short time, and, what is worse for his companions, it usually drives him mad before it kills him.

Knowing that survivors can exist for protracted periods if they have water—food is not nearly so important—the Coast Guard teaches that rain water is one of the greatest blessings to shipwrecked mariners but there are a number of important facts to remember about catching it. Ignorance of these facts has resulted in illnesses and even some fatalities, chiefly because the canvas used to collect the precious rain water had been exposed to salt spray which polluted the rain as it fell into the receptacle. To avoid this, the Coast Guard advises that the first canvasful of rain water be thrown away, despite the will power such an act would require of thirsty

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men, and tells them how to rig the canvas as high above the boat or raft as possible.

In its instructions regarding the provision of water for the lifeboats and rafts, which occupy almost two full pages, the book contains some advice which may be surprising to landlubbers.

"In filling water containers such as . . . one-gallon cans, it is desirable, if possible, to use boiling water," one paragraph begins. "The cans should be filled within one inch of the top to allow for expansion and freezing and sealed while hot. This method drives off the dissolved oxygen and thereby prevents rusting."

Publication of the Coast Guard's book filled a long-felt need, but like many such things it took a war to bring it about. Until it appeared there had been no book in the history of maritime commerce that was required reading for seamen on active duty—"no *vade mecum* that the mariner took with him wherever he went," as one Coast Guard officer put it, "no guide to tell him what to do when all hope seemed gone.

"And although other maritime nations had sensed the need for such a volume, no accomplishment in the shape of a complete edition had ever been achieved. Great Britain, for example, had experimented with the general idea for some time, but without carrying the project through to completion.

"With regard to our own merchant seamen, the void that

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the lack of such a book left seems, in retrospect, more than obvious. When men are tossed about helplessly for days on end in a sparsely equipped and highly vulnerable boat or raft, and when only knowledge can help them survive until rescued, there is grave danger that it will not be hunger or thirst or exposure which will kill them so much as their own ignorance of how to sustain life with only what the sea itself will yield them."

Perhaps the most brilliant demonstration of the power of knowledge, human ingenuity and presence of mind in such cases was that given by three members of a Navy plane crew forced down in the Pacific early in the war. Undoubtedly the strength of character, plus the skillful application of what he knew, displayed by the pilot, a chief petty officer, saved the lives of those three men.

When the harrowing details of such ordeals first began to reach the public in the early days of the war, a great to-do was raised about the provision of adequate supplies of fishing gear for lifeboats and rafts so that the men would have a better chance of fending for themselves. Former Governor Gifford Pinchot of Pennsylvania, an enthusiastic and expert deep-sea fisherman in peacetime, was one of the most active in the campaign for the inclusion of such gear in the required equipment of all merchant ships. The Pinchot kit contained also the materials and instructions for extracting potable fluids from the flesh of fish.

That the idea was good there can be no question, but offi-

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cers studying the problems of survivors of torpedoings think it was somewhat overemphasized. It was all right in the early days, they explain, when a substantial number of ships were running the gantlet of the submarine blockade alone and many of them were being sunk far from any other shipping. In those cases the survivors frequently had to spend weeks in their lifeboats or rafts.

Today, when virtually all United Nations' ships move in strongly guarded convoys, the situation is changed. One or more of the escort vessels is designated for rescue work in the event that any ships in the convoy are sunk. Consequently, the chance that survivors will have to spend any great length of time tossing around in boats or rafts is small. In fact, the average can now be figured in hours, rather than days, so that there is not the same need for the men to be able to catch fish for food and drink as there was at the outset.

Many of the safety measures advocated by the Coast Guard on the basis of recommendations of men who have been through the mill may seem inconsequential at first blush, but usually they are rooted in bitter experience and almost without exception they represent the composite views of the survivors, not those of any one individual.

Take, for example, the question of footholds for lifeboat lowering bitts—the metal posts around which the lifeboat falls are snubbed so that the boat doesn't fall too rapidly. As the toll taken by the U-boats grew ominously blacker, it was

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found that more and more seamen were reporting difficulty in handling the falls when their ships developed heavy lists, because there was no way in which to brace their feet at that angle. Accordingly, steps were taken to see that cleats or footholds were provided so that even if the man had to lie almost on his back on the deck because of the list, he could still surge the falls properly.

Another recommendation that may have brought from ship owners a lifting of the eyebrows, if not some forthright profanity, was one for rounding the edges of all lifeboat thwarts and benches. Such a request might have sounded like coddling our tough, hardy seamen, but actually it was nothing of the sort. Men found by experience that if they had to spend long periods at the oars of lifeboats, seats with sharp edges cut their flesh cruelly, especially when their flesh had lost its normal powers of resistance through malnutrition.

Firm in its belief that there can be safety at sea, even in wartime, the Coast Guard's search for it is never ended. And Captain Shepherd voiced the hope that it will not end with the war.

"It would be a greater tragedy than those already suffered by our merchant seamen if we did not benefit from their experiences," he said, "and put them to the constructive use of all sea-faring men for all time to come."

In Shepherd's view, merchant seamen are not expendable and the Coast Guard's fight for their safety and well-being



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is, in fact, a fight for the safety and well-being of the nation itself, for if the merchant seamen fail in their momentous task, we will have lost the war.

Discussing some of the problems relative to the safety of the merchant seamen, Shephard declared that one of the most alarming and, at the same time, one of the most challenging aspects of the war at sea was the speed with which some of our torpedoed merchant ships went down.

"Frequently there has been insufficient time to launch lifeboats properly," he explained. "It therefore became increasingly necessary for us to devote more and more study to life-rafts. The evidence that we gathered from the men who had spent long, trying days adrift under all sorts of weather conditions made it mandatory that decisive steps be taken for equipping our merchant ships with more adequate rafts than the old ones so long in use.

"We discovered that the old rafts with flush decks and unprotected sides proved torturous to seamen in all kinds of weather. Survivors were unprotected alike from the sea, from the sun and from extreme heat or cold. The dreaded 'immersion foot' frequently was caused by a long stay on such rafts, and many men were lost due to this or other ailments resulting from exposure."

"Immersion foot" is not a new disease, but it is much more prevalent as a result of the war than ever before. It may develop whether the victim has been wearing shoes or not and, because of its prevalence among survivors of tor-

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pedoings, the Coast Guard's safety book goes into some detail as to its cause and cure.

"Usually the first thing noticed is painful feet," the passage says, "and then a few days later the feet and legs begin to swell. These first symptoms are much like chilblain even though the water temperature may have been above freezing. After a time, discoloration of the skin appears and blood or water blisters, ulcers, and even death of the tissues may occur. The feet feel numb, and they may become paralyzed. Numbness and tingling sensation may be felt in the arms and hands.

"You have read above that swelling of the feet and legs may occur with a poor diet, especially if there has not been enough vitamins or enough protein. This condition is different from the swelling of 'immersion foot,' because in 'immersion foot' there is *much pain*, often discoloration of the skin, and the feet are likely to have ulcers or sores on them. These other symptoms are not found with the swelling caused by a poor diet.

"First aid treatment for 'immersion foot' is very important because the vitality of the legs and feet has been lost and the *tissues are easily damaged*. With treatment, circulation of the blood in the feet and legs is improved, but remember that too rapid a return of circulation may cause severe pain and further damage. *Be very careful in handling the limbs* while numbness is present, to keep from injuring the flesh. Keep the victim's feet and legs raised above his body level

## SEARCH FOR SAFETY

and put cold compresses on them every 15 or 20 minutes to relieve the pain. . . . Keep the victim's body warm. . . . *Never put direct heat on a foot or leg suffering from immersion.* Massage is harmful to the legs and should not be used. . . ."

Physical health and well-being are not the sole concerns of the Coast Guard's safety-at-sea experts, either. Behind many of their suggestions are reasons that have to do with the morale and mental health of the men. It was to bolster their morale as well as to lessen fatigue, for example, that the Coast Guard ordered the legal capacities of all lifeboats reduced enough for the occupants to be able to lie down occasionally, instead of having to remain bolt upright all the time they were adrift.

Also, although the experts contend that drinking water is the only sustenance that seamen absolutely must have in order to keep alive, they freely recommend inclusion of such things as vitamins, food concentrates and similar things in the emergency rations because they know they will help the men *feel* that they are better off whether that is actually the case or not.

Along the same line of reasoning, the Coast Guard recommends that men adrift in boats or rafts not eat their rations for each meal all at once, but rather that they consume small quantities at more frequent intervals. To men totally alone on a seemingly endless expanse of sea, without room to move around and without diversion of any kind, nothing

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brings greater relief than the ceremony of issuing rations, however pitifully slim the ration might seem to a landlubber.

The extreme advisability of keeping busy as a means of avoiding panic or hysteria was emphasized by Kaare Karstaad.

"We kept busy mending the rig or fishing or *doing something*."

He and his mates even dived under their raft to clean it! But after forty-eight days adrift, their constant occupation proved to have paid well because their minds and nerves stood up admirably under the strain of the ordeal.

Thrilling and often tragic sagas of the sea are buried in the files of the Marine Inspection division at Coast Guard Headquarters while the search for better means of safeguarding life at sea goes on. Take the case of Junior Third Officer James Cameron, for example.

Young Cameron was on the bridge of a tanker early one morning in November. They were in the North Atlantic and the weather already had winter's bitter lash in it. Without warning, a torpedo crashed into the tanker's hull about amidships, tossing Captain Soren Sorensen out of his bunk onto the floor of his cabin. Still somewhat stunned, the skipper made his way to the bridge. Flames were leaping high in the air from the 'midships section and shouts of officers and men trying to get boats ready for launching added to the confusion.

"Have some cigarettes put in my boat," the Captain told

## SEARCH FOR SAFETY

Cameron, and turned back to his cabin to get a flashlight and his ship's papers. When he emerged, the only boat accessible from the bridge had been swung out and was ready to lower. On the basis of the experience of other ships, Sorensen and the others probably thought their ship was in danger of immediate disintegration and the thing for them to do was to make their getaway while they could. In fact, the Coast Guard's Marine Inspection division recommends just such procedure—not only in the case of tankers but in all ships.

"You usually can reboard the ship if it develops that it is not going to sink," one officer explained, "so the thing to do is get the boats away as quickly as possible. Then go back aboard if you are able."

At any rate, Sorensen and all the other deck officers of his ship but one got away in the boat together with five seamen. Young Cameron and the rest of the crew remained aboard and when Cameron arrived on deck with the Captain's cigarettes, he found he was alone on the bridge and in command of the ship. It was truly a frightening accession to command, but Cameron rose to the occasion in a manner in keeping with the finest traditions of the sea. There was no panic in him although with flames roaring skyward from the hold punctured by the torpedo, he could almost touch death.

A steadying influence undoubtedly was the sight of the young Navy officer who commanded the Armed Guard making his way forward to his guns, undeterred by the holocaust

## FIRST FLEET

behind him. Also reassuring was the voice on the engine-room telephone—when Cameron finally got around to answering its insistent summons:

“What the hell’s wrong up there? Everything’s under control!”

Perhaps they weren’t all going to Kingdom Come in a blinding flash.

Cameron ordered the ’midships section flooded and then set about fighting the fire topsides. He still had all but seven of the crew available because, except for the five men who got away in the only lifeboat launched, all the others were on board. Only two had been injured and there were no deaths, miraculously, from the torpedoing.

Gradually the fire was extinguished and after some delay the engines began turning over again. They could make only a fraction of their normal speed and because of her flooded condition, the ship was difficult to maneuver. Nevertheless, young Cameron succeeded in working her into a United Nations port although it necessitated him standing twenty-nine consecutive watches on the bridge!

Shortly after the torpedoing, the Captain and others in the lifeboat were picked up by an escort vessel; although they requested that they be put back aboard when it became apparent that the tanker was not going to sink, the medical officer on the rescue ship ruled that they were not in fit condition to return.

Temporary repairs were effected to the tanker, a new cap-

## SEARCH FOR SAFETY

tain and other officers arrived and after the ship had been inspected by insurance and other authorities, it was decided to move her several hundred miles southward to a port where permanent repairs could be made.

She was only at sea a matter of hours, however, when a storm came up which proved too much for her weakened structural condition and she broke in two. It is one of the tragic ironies of war that young Cameron, hailed by the press a couple of days earlier as the ship's savior, was one of eleven men lost when the forward half of the vessel went down.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### COAST GUARD ALOFT

THE destroyer *Sturtevant* sliced her way through the Atlantic at an easy speed. There was no sign of the enemy and all seemed well. Suddenly a terrific explosion shook the ship and almost in less time than it takes to tell, she was gone.

Her radiomen had no warning of what was to come and consequently no opportunity to send out the usual distress call. As a result, no one ashore or elsewhere afloat could be expected to know that she had met with disaster. Probably her survivors realized that fact and when they found themselves alone on the ocean, they doubtless looked forward to protracted suffering and possibly death.

But they reckoned without the Coast Guard's small but effective air arm.

Aviation Machinist's Mate (first) A. M. Cupples, a Coast Guard enlisted pilot, was on patrol in the vicinity where the *Sturtevant* went down. He didn't see the sinking but came along in time to spot the survivors in the water. Cupples was flying a land plane and therefore could do nothing himself about picking up the men. Unfortunately, he also was flying without a radioman and was thus unable to send out a call



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for help. So he did the next best thing. Shoving his throttle "through the gate," he headed for his base, landed and reported his discovery.

At first he had some difficulty getting the Navy to believe his story. There had been no distress call from any ship in the area nor any other indication of trouble.

"You must be mistaken, fella," they told him.

Cupples insisted and declared he was going back to the spot as soon as he could refuel and get a radioman. Still skeptical, the Navy dispatched surface craft to the location Cupples had given and finally the survivors were picked up.

"Had it not been for the Coast Guard . . ." It is not only the *Sturtevant's* survivors who can measure their chances for life in those terms, for up and down both the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, Coast Guard patrol planes maintain a constant vigil and though that branch of the service got a late start compared to the rest of aviation, it has made up in heroic, spectacular achievement what it lacks in size and age.

A good indication of the reputation the young aviation branch enjoys may be found in the fact that late in 1943 a force of Coast Guard PBY's (Catalina flying boats) was assigned to relieve a Navy squadron which had been operating in Greenland, one of the world's toughest spots for an airman.

Even before that compliment was paid to the Coast Guard's fliers, they had been operating for considerable periods in the Arctic in ship-based planes. In fact, it was one

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of those which figured in an outstanding example of the heroism and self-sacrifice which characterize the air arm of the Coast Guard as well as its surface units, for the fliers accept as their own the seaman's tradition that "you gotta go out, but you don't have to come back." A sterling reason for that, of course, is that Coast Guard aviators must be seamen first. The commissioned officers can get flight training only after they have had three years of sea duty.

Late in November of 1942, the cutter *Northland* received word by radio that communications had been established with the crew of an Army Flying Fortress which had crashed on the Greenland icecap two weeks previously. The cutter was instructed to proceed to the aid of the fliers who reported that some of their number were seriously injured in the crash, gangrene had set in some of their wounds and all were terribly cold and hungry. The *Northland* proceeded to the Greenland coast but many miles of ice lay between her and the stranded fliers. The latter's plight seemed hopeless.

Lieutenant John A. Pritchard, Jr., twenty-nine-year-old Coast Guard aviator from Burbank, California, didn't think so. He went to Commander Francis C. Pollard, the *Northland's* skipper and also a Californian, and said he had a plan for getting the Army fliers off the icecap without resorting to the long ordeal of trying to reach them by dog team with the probably fatal delay that that would entail.

"I've been studying this thing for a long time, Com-

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mander," he said, "and I'm confident I can land the plane on the ice with the wheels up, just as if I were landing on water. Furthermore, I know I can take off the same way."

Pritchard had been flying continuously in Greenland for the preceding nine months and had demonstrated himself to be a competent, careful airman. But Commander Pollard was understandably reluctant at first to authorize the flight. And yet those poor devils up there on the icecap needed rescuing. Certainly that was the Coast Guard's time-honored business. Undoubtedly arguing thus, Pollard acquiesced and Pritchard got ready to take off.

He looked grotesquely overstuffed in his heavy, sheepskin-lined black leather flying suit as he stood on the *Northland's* fantail waiting for the single engine of his Grumman amphibian to warm up. Then after a few final words with Commander Pollard, the pilot and his radioman, Benjamin A. Bottoms of Salem, Massachusetts, climbed into the cockpit and the plane was hoisted over the side into an ice-free stretch of water.

Skillfully Pritchard drove the little plane across the surface of the bay and lifted it into the air. Fog enshrouded them almost before they were clear of the water. Pritchard had to get above the 2,000-foot-high icecap in order to begin his search and he flew for half an hour over the desolate waste before he located the wrecked Fortress. In his months of flying in the area he had learned only too well the perils involved, the manner in which a flier loses his all-important

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sense of depth perception when flying over that white waste so that he can't tell how far above the ice he is and frequently can't even distinguish the horizon.

Much of the time up there, flight instruments cannot be depended upon and for that reason there is little or no night flying possible in Greenland. An altimeter set for sea level, for example, isn't of much help to a pilot if he doesn't have a chart showing the altitude of the terrain over which he happens to be flying. In the case of the Greenland icecap, there just aren't any complete charts.

Pritchard, therefore, was well aware of the dangers of his mission but he profited by the experiences of those others. When he located the Fortress and her trio of survivors—ironically, they had been on a rescue mission themselves, searching for a missing cargo plane which had disappeared on a flight from Iceland, when they crashed—he circled the spot while Bottoms radioed a message that they intended to set the plane down near by.

"Don't try it," replied the Army fliers, with courageous solicitude. "You'll never make it."

Pritchard ignored that and picked out a long downslope of ice well covered with snow. He had the problem of his take-off in mind and knew that his chances would be better if the plane were headed downhill. The landing was as smooth as if it were on the unruffled surface of a South Sea lagoon.

They still were four miles from the B-17, so leaving Bot-

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toms to keep in touch with the *Northland* and the wrecked plane, Pritchard set out over the ice on foot. Death narrowly missed him at one point on that journey, for he fell into a crevasse that was over his head. Some of those apertures in the icecap, covered by a thin and deceptive crust of snow, are hundreds of feet deep. Fortunately, the one into which Pritchard plunged was only a little over his head and he was able to climb out.

Arrived at the bomber, Pritchard found the men seriously weakened by their ordeal. One had a broken arm and the other two were suffering from gangrene. With great difficulty he managed to get all three back to his plane and it was decided to take the two most seriously injured back to the cutter on the first flight.

The take-off was described later by one of the rescued men, Private Alexander L. Tucciarone of the Bronx, New York.

"I can only explain it by saying 'God was with us,' " he said. "We bumped from hill to hill, each time bounding a little higher until suddenly we had the old familiar smooth sense of being air-borne."

Pritchard had established a new "first" for the Coast Guard, for he was the first flier to land on the Greenland icecap and take off again. Others had tried it but most of them had landed with their wheels down, the wheels had promptly broken through the snow crust and the planes

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nosed over. Some of the pilots were able to walk away from the wrecks.

By the time Pritchard got back to the *Northland*, the Arctic night had fallen and he alighted on the water in the glare of the cutter's searchlights. The entire crew lined the rail and cheered as the heroes came aboard.

The two rescued men soon were comfortably installed in the cutter's sick bay and one of the first things they asked for was Pritchard's autograph.

Next morning Pritchard and Bottoms took off again to complete their job. They had had to leave the third man from the Fortress alone on the icecap the night before. They managed the landing and take-off the second time without any apparent difficulty, for the cutter picked up a message from Bottoms saying they had the third man aboard and were in the air again. But nothing more ever was heard from them.

A heavy snowstorm had come up with the treacherous speed characteristic of that country and Pritchard apparently lost his bearings for a fatal period. Searchers located the wreckage of his plane from the air some days later where it had crashed into an upthrust of rock and ice. The front of the aircraft was demolished, the searchers reported, although the tail surface appeared undamaged and there was no sign of life around it. "Greater love hath no man . . ."

But Pritchard and Bottoms did not die in vain. Not only had they saved the lives of the two soldiers brought out on

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their first trip from the icecap, but they showed the way for the rescue of others. Bernt Balchen, famous Arctic and Antarctic flier and explorer, who is now in the Army, performed a similar rescue by putting a seaplane down on a small pool of water that had formed in a depression in the icecap. Next day the pool had disappeared through a crack in the ice!

Early in the history of aviation, men of vision in the Coast Guard saw the possibilities of planes for supplementing the work of the cutters. Planes were so much faster than the surface craft, they would be invaluable, for example, in searching wide areas for the old and poorly maintained sailing ships which were always getting into difficulties necessitating the aid of the Coast Guard. Planes could spot the distressed craft quickly, thus enabling the cutters to get to the location without undue delay.

As early as 1916, in fact, Congress authorized the Coast Guard to detail officers and enlisted men to aviation duty and to establish ten aviation stations on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. As Congress sometimes does, however, it failed to appropriate any money for this ambitious project, treating Coast Guard aviation much as an earlier Congress treated Alexander Hamilton's plan for the construction of ten sailing cutters for the Revenue Service.

In spite of that Congressional failure, the actual beginning of the Coast Guard's air arm can legitimately be traced to the summer of 1915 when Captain B. M. Chiswell, then com-

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manding the cutter *Onandaga* at Hampton Roads, and two young lieutenants began experimenting with a borrowed plane to determine whether there was a place for aircraft in the service. Results of the experiments were so successful that one of the young officers, Third Lieutenant Elmer F. Stone, was assigned to Pensacola to learn to fly and the other, Second Lieutenant Norman B. Hall—now Captain Hall, in charge of the Coast Guard's Port Security Section—was ordered to the Curtiss Airplane and Motor Company at Hammondsport, New York, to learn how to build airplanes.

These enthusiastic young pioneers had barely got started on their new studies when World War I broke out and upset the plans of a lot of people including the United States Coast Guard. Stone, who served as one of the pilots of the NC-4 on her history-making transatlantic flight in 1919 and who died in 1936 with the rank of commander, was assigned to duty with the Navy as a pilot aboard the cruiser *Huntington* and Hall was transferred to the Buffalo office of the Inspector of Naval Aircraft at the Curtiss Plant.

Still without funds to establish Coast Guard aviation, another attempt was made by some of its proponents in 1920. The Naval Air Station at Morehead City, North Carolina, was made available and the Coast Guard set up a tent hangar there. Up on Ten Pound Island at Gloucester, Massachusetts, Carl Christian von Paulsen, or Captain "V.P." as he is known to the Greenland Patrol today, borrowed a plane



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from the Navy and set up a tent hangar there. Von Paulsen, perhaps the oldest and boldest pilot of the Coast Guard, operated an obsolete seaplane there on a number of difficult missions.

Down at Morehead City, Stone and a few other young hopefuls, also using borrowed Navy planes, demonstrated the value of aviation as an adjunct of the Coast Guard by hunting for wrecked planes and surface craft of all types, by helping fishermen locate schools of fish and by doing a variety of other chores. Repeatedly, Congress' attention to these operations was invited by high officials of both the Coast Guard and the Treasury, but their appeals for funds fell on deaf ears. In dejection the struggling young aviators struck their tents.

Paradoxically, lawbreakers can claim almost full credit for the ultimate establishment of an honest-to-goodness Coast Guard aviation service. For in 1926 it had become apparent to Congress that the Noble Experiment of Prohibition had gone awry, that rumrunning was virtually out of control. Then, and only then, Congress swiftly appropriated \$152,000 for five new planes for the service and two new air stations. It was almost beyond belief. Losing no time, the Coast Guard set up one of the new stations at Cape May, New Jersey, and another at Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Gradually the service expanded. Steadily its record of achievement grew. The most spectacular performances, of course, were the landings which the Coast Guard fliers made

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at sea to take injured or sick seamen or passengers off their ships and rush them to hospitals. These feats made headlines and contributed materially to the development of a special type of plane which is deemed suitable for that work and which can be regarded as the forerunner of the great clipper-type flying boats which made transoceanic flying history in the years immediately preceding World War II.

A number of the senior pilots of the service had more than eighty such landings apiece to their credit, and in the opinion of many of them the training they thus acquired made them especially well qualified for rescue work in the combat zones when World War II began. A proposal was made by the Coast Guard to put these highly specialized fliers at the disposal of the Army and Navy air forces for rescue work in the forward areas where combat fliers might be forced to land on the water.

Nothing came of the proposal, however, and the subject is a sore one for a lot of the Coast Guard fliers. Because of their relatively high rank, a lot of them are forced to take over administrative or command jobs where they have no opportunity to use their flight skill. As a result a number of them are giving up aviation and applying for sea duty because it offers them the only chance for active service.

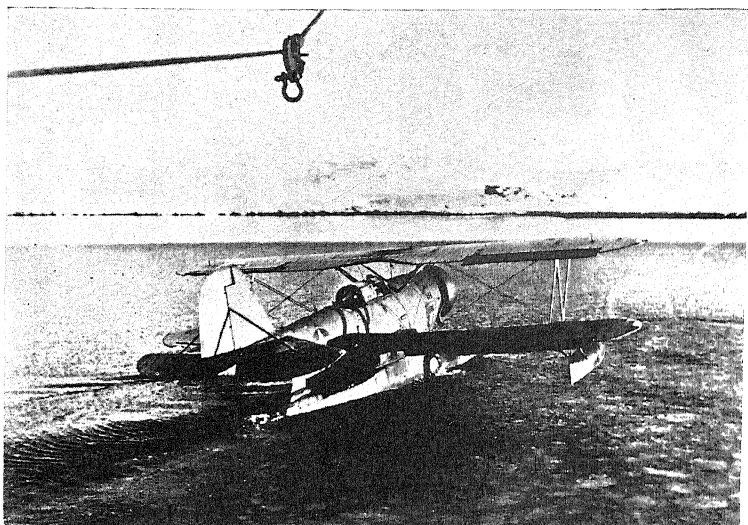
Aside from personal considerations, one reason that the fliers regret the lack of approval of the project is that they see in it the chance to lay the groundwork for a service they are convinced will be urgently needed when peace comes.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

### COAST GUARD RESCUE IN GREENLAND

Ready for the job. . . Coast Guard Lieutenant Pritchard stands alert as his plane is readied aboard a Coast Guard cutter. His heavy clothing stood him in good stead when, after landing his aircraft, he was forced to trudge four miles over icy terrain to reach the Army fliers, all of whom were suffering intensely from the cold and hunger.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### THE TAKE-OFF

The Coast Guard amphibian plane has been put over the side, and Lieutenant Pritchard and Radioman Bottoms are ready for the take-off.



*U. S. Coast Guard Photo*

#### SPECTACULAR LANDING ON ICECAP BY LIEUTENANT PRITCHARD

This sketch by Coast Guardsman Larry O'Toole shows the spectacular landing made by Lt. John A. Pritchard in his rescue of the two Army airmen.

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"Everybody who owns a plane and has an office in his hat is filing applications for permission to establish overseas airlines after the war," one top-notch Coast Guard aviator said. "It's perfectly obvious that there's going to be a tremendous expansion of transoceanic air travel when hostilities are over.

"Somebody is going to have to look after those passengers. We won't be able to have repetitions of the *Cavalier* incident all over the globe."

The British Imperial Airways flying boat, *Cavalier*, was forced down at sea en route from Bermuda to New York back in 1939. Coast Guard cutters were rushed to her aid from as far north as Cape May. A terrific storm was raging off Hatteras, making it impossible for the cutters with their top speeds limited to about fifteen knots to make any sort of time on the run.

Fortunately the big flying boat did not sink immediately and all but one of her passengers and crew ultimately were rescued by a merchantman which *happened to be in the vicinity*.

"There won't always be a ship handy like that," went on the Coast Guard aviator. "So I feel that there will have to be some co-operative sort of arrangement such as we have for the International Ice Patrol to deal with the problem of safeguarding life along the routes which will be followed by the transoceanic airlines."

In his view—and it is shared by other high-ranking Coast Guard officers who are not fliers—there will have to be large

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and speedy flying boats based at strategic points such as Newfoundland and Iceland for the northern great-circle course, able to get to the scene of a crash or forced landing at sea in the shortest possible time. These planes and their crews will have to be capable of landing on rough water and taking off again. Big speedy surface cutters will have to supplement the planes, because there will be times when weather conditions will not permit even Coast Guard planes to fly.

Finally, Coast Guardsmen envision the need for organizations and facilities to salvage the great flying boats that may be forced down. Craft like the Martin Mars cost so much that it will be extremely uneconomical to neglect any opportunity to bring them back to port and they will be so big and sturdy that there probably will be many cases, assuming they happen to be forced down, in which they will be well able to remain afloat for protracted periods.

Like the rest of the Coast Guard, the aviation arm has expanded tremendously since the war began. It has six times as many pilots and three times as many planes, which means that the available planes can be kept in operation a greater percentage of the time. Ultimately, according to present plans, the service's planes will be fivefold the number it had on Pearl Harbor day.

Although details for the most part must await the end of the war, it can be said that Coast Guard aircraft have had more than their share of contacts with the enemy. From

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December 7, 1941, to June 30, 1943, for example, Coast Guard aircraft delivered sixty-one bombing attacks on enemy submarines; they located more than a thousand survivors from torpedoed ships or aircraft and sent surface craft to their rescue and actually rescued ninety-five others themselves.

Some idea of the value of the service rendered by Coast Guard airmen may be gleaned from the estimate that property assisted and saved from possible loss in the nineteen months prior to July 1, 1943, was worth approximately \$10,000,000. In that period, Coast Guard planes made a total of 763 assistance flights on a wide variety of missions. Among these were searches for disabled land and sea aircraft and surface vessels and their survivors, transportation of serum and other medical supplies, flood relief, transportation of injured persons and various types of assistance to other government agencies. A total of 17,834 patrol flights were made in that period during which more than 60,000,000 square miles were searched.

Aside from its wartime program, Coast Guard aviation still performs its former duties, one of the most important of which is the observation of ice-pack conditions in the Great Lakes. By keeping daily tabs on that situation, a lone Coast Guard aviator has been instrumental in getting the low-lying ore ships in operation weeks earlier than usual, thus helping to speed up the vital steel production of the "Arsenal of Democracy."

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Inevitably, the greater part of Coast Guard aviation's work is connected with the war but in spite of that it has managed to make notable humanitarian contributions.

For instance, when a great patrol-plane pilot spots the bearded survivors of a torpedoed ship bobbing around in a lifeboat far below him, frequently the first thing he does is to "bomb" them. The plane circles the boat, makes a brief run over it and then repeats the process. On the second run, the bomb bay opens and down plunges one of a pair of "bombs" which each Coast Guard patrol plane carries in its racks.

This sounds like strange tactics for the "mercy" fliers to be pursuing toward helpless seamen but all is not what it seems. The "bomb" is actually a container full of food which is dropped from a height of about a hundred feet, lands near the boatload of survivors and floats until they can row over and retrieve it.

The "provision bomb" as it is known in the service was developed and perfected by two aviation enlisted men stationed at the Elizabeth City, North Carolina, Coast Guard Air Station. An interesting story lies behind the experiments of the two men and the need for the "bomb."

When the war began, a cargo parachute developed by the Forest Service was tried out by the Coast Guard as a means of getting emergency supplies to victims of enemy action at sea. The parachute had been a success over land, but its use over water was found to be impracticable because it could



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not be depended upon to come down close enough to weakened men for them to swim or row to it and frequently breakage and complete loss of the containers resulted.

A number of alternatives were tried and discarded. Milk cans attached to kapok life preservers were used for a short time, but these containers were bulky, hard to obtain and often were lost when the kapok tore away upon contact with the water.

The Mark V practice bomb finally was hit upon as having the proper dimensions although the tail made the device too heavy for the desired lifesaving purpose. A watertight, lightweight fin made first of wood and cardboard but later of wood and doped fabric was substituted thereupon. This solved that part of the problem, but how to get a nose for the bomb heavy enough to make it drop nose first so it wouldn't ricochet, and yet not so heavy that it would sink the whole works, was a poser.

The two inventors, Frederick H. Denio, metalsmith first class, and Harold V. Booth, aviation machinist first class, hit on the answer after many failures. They designed a concrete nose, cast in four sections which are then covered with a thin skin of cement. This binds the sections together and holds them while the bomb is in flight but it shatters upon impact with the water; the rest of the concrete sinks, leaving the bomb standing upright in the water.

By placing a thick layer of sponge rubber or heavy cork between the nose and the reinforced bottom of the bomb,

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the force of the impact could be absorbed and damage to the contents prevented.

The "provision bomb" can be dropped from low-flying planes on any spot desired. It can be hung from standard racks or thrown from the hatch of a plane. Light in weight—approximately twenty-two pounds—it contains about twenty pounds of provisions including seven cans of water, one pint of rye whisky, two rations of the Navy's concentrated food, cigarettes, matches, four kinds of medicine, bandages, adhesive tape, salve for burns, rations for three or four days and a can opener.

For special emergencies, such as in response to radioed requests from ships at sea, the "bomb" can be used to deliver other specifically needed items.

Commander Richard L. Burke, commanding officer of the station, took an active interest in the development of the bomb because, as a veteran of many rescues at sea, he recognized the need for it. For his outstanding exploits in air-sea rescues, Burke was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross shortly after he had put his plane down on the ocean and picked up survivors of the crew of a German submarine!

Another Coast Guard flier who won high honor for a rescue at sea was Lieutenant David O. Reed of Winchester, Kentucky. On patrol duty in the Gulf of Mexico, Reed spotted two lifeboats containing twenty-one Norwegian seamen whose motor ship had been torpedoed and sunk by a

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U-boat. The men were badly sunburned and one of them had a broken back.

Reed set his twin-engined seaplane down close to the boats and began taking the survivors aboard. His plane ordinarily could carry only eight or nine persons but Reed, undaunted, got all twenty-one Norwegians aboard. In addition to the passengers, he was carrying 600 gallons of fuel.

"Plane was extremely tail heavy," the pilot said in his report, "and pilot and copilot, Ensign V. C. Tully, USCG, of Biloxi, Mississippi, both applied full weight to push yoke forward. In spite of their combined efforts the plane took to the air at forty knots indicated air speed, in an extremely nose-high attitude. Before clearing finally into the air the plane came back on the water once.

"Once in the air no difficulty was experienced in picking up speed and in getting the plane in a level attitude. In level flight and stabilizer set full nose down it was still necessary to apply forward yoke pressure."

Reed landed his overloaded craft on Lake Ponchartrain, New Orleans, without mishap and got all his passengers ashore. Subsequently he was awarded the Navy Cross for the feat, one of the few Coast Guardsmen to be so honored up to that time.

Up in Alaska, Coast Guard airmen are not only quietly making aviation history in a routine sort of way but they have organized a parachute rescue squad, believed to be the first of its kind, who will be able to drop to the aid of vic-

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tims of airplane crashes or other accidents in isolated Alaskan spots. Chief Boatswain Arthur Hook, who used to do wing-walking and other barnstorming stunts at county fairs, organized this new outfit and has been training them at Seeley Lake, Montana.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### SEAGOING SURGEONS

THERE is much that is fantastic about World War II—so much, in fact, that even minor miracles apparently don't count—but no saga of the Coast Guard would be complete without mention of, nay, tribute to the medical men who serve with it. To the few casual observers who chance to identify them as members of the medical profession, they doubtless look like any other naval officer in their blues or khaki but the truth is they are not in the armed forces at all. They are commissioned in the United States Public Health Service.

The Public Health Service itself is fairly well known. No one is particularly surprised when one or more of its doctors or "microbe hunters" turns up in some pestilence-threatened area. Quite the contrary, in fact. But the idea of them stepping out of an invasion barge on some still-contested beach-head in the Mediterranean or on the other side of the globe is one that has not yet gained what you'd call wide currency. Nevertheless, that's exactly what goes on almost wherever the Coast Guard is fighting. Public Health Service doctors, most of them tough, eager young fellows but some not so young, are right there with the fighting men.

## FIRST FLEET

Approximately 460 PHS doctors, a third of them dentists, now are serving with the Coast Guard afloat or at various shore installations in the United States and Greenland. At this writing, three have laid down their own lives while on that duty. Two perished with cutters lost at sea while the third died in an airplane crash. And the United States had been at war almost two years before Congress provided that Public Health Service doctors on duty with the armed forces should have the same death and disability benefits as the members of those forces.

Probably no surgical feat in naval annals will top that of the pharmacist's mate who, with no previous experience save as an onlooker, performed a successful appendectomy aboard a submarine deep in a Jap-infested portion of the Pacific. There was stark drama about that incident not to mention the suspense and uncertainty. There was also great courage—on the part of both the patient and the “doctor.” It is a case that stands alone.

On the other hand, the doctors aboard the Coast Guard's little ships carry out their missions of mercy under conditions which would make the average surgeon or physician shudder to contemplate.

One of the cutters on the Greenland Patrol, for example, was fighting her way through a heavy gale after having made a dangerous trip into a remote Eskimo village to deliver fuel and food to the natives. While the storm was at

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its height, a nineteen-year-old seaman was stricken with acute appendicitis.

An operation was imperative and delay might be fatal. But consider the plight of the young surgeon, Dr. Edward B. Gall. Aboard ships of the cutter class, the sick bay usually is hardly worthy of the name so far as size is concerned. Most of them are only big enough to accommodate ambulatory cases. If a seaman breaks an arm or leg, he can be treated in his own bunk. But an operation for appendicitis is a different matter. Probably most doctors in such circumstances would requisition the officers' wardroom and rig an operating table there.

In Gall's case, however, there was not only the question of an appropriate place for the operation. The ship was rolling and pitching heavily, so much that even the removal of a splinter with a dull putty knife would have been a rather dangerous performance. Whereas, removal of an appendix with a razor-keen scalpel . . .

It was a dismaying prospect and yet the life of the suffering young sailor demanded that the operation be performed.

The solution was not only to strap the patient securely to the operating table, but the legs of the doctor and his two assistants were lashed to the table as well. Within a few weeks the patient had made a complete recovery.

On the face of it, it would seem that no one would have a deeper appreciation of the blessings of anesthesia than patients who find themselves in such extremities as the lad

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Dr. Gall operated on or young Ensign Kenneth B. Nelson, twenty-six, of Chicago, who had a similar experience.

With his ship in the teeth of a hundred-mile-an-hour North Atlantic gale, Nelson's appendix began to kick up. Dr. Paul W. Lucas of Durham, North Carolina, a junior grade lieutenant in the Public Health Service, decided that an operation was necessary.

"I've never seen a storm like that during my twenty-three years at sea," another of the cutter's officers declared, on their return to an East Coast port two weeks later. "A hundred-mile-an-hour gale was blowing. When Ensign Nelson was stricken, we rigged a false wooden deck over the concrete one in the operating room and secured the table to this.

"Then Nelson was lashed to the table and an anesthetic administered. Dr. Lucas performed the operation assisted by a warrant machinist, a chief pharmacist's mate, and an electrician's mate, first class.

"As the doctor completed his operation and started closing the wound, the anesthesia began to wear off. Nelson regained consciousness. Though in great pain, he just gritted his teeth and held on until surgery was completed.

"Within a week Nelson was able to be up and around."

A few months before the cutter *Escanaba* was lost with all but two of her officers and men, she figured in one of the greatest rescue operations of the war. A transport had been torpedoed in the North Atlantic and literally hundreds of



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military personnel and civilians had to go over the side into the icy water in the dead of night.

There still were plenty of them bobbing around on rafts or merely in life jackets when the *Escanaba* came on the scene, but many of them were beyond helping themselves and it was necessary for members of the cutter's crew to go into the freezing water after them. One of the intrepid souls who did go over the cutter's side with a line about his waist was heavy-set Assistant Surgeon Ralph R. Nix, a drawling United States Public Health Service doctor who hailed from McComb, Mississippi. In addition, Nix had to direct and assist in rendering first aid to all the survivors. Some idea of the extent of the job may be gained from the Navy's announcement that 132 men were rescued by the *Escanaba* on that occasion—almost half as many again as were in the cutter's entire crew.

During a battle with a surfaced U-boat, the cutter *Spencer* was hit by one shell which caused twenty-four casualties among her crew, four of them serious. Immediately, the facilities prepared by Dr. John J. Davies, of Davenport, Iowa, for just such eventualities were being taxed to the utmost. For the ensuing seventy-two hours the surgeon was scarcely off his feet. Describing the difficulties of the situation later, he recounted that at one point while he was in the midst of an abdominal operation on one lad, one of the *Spencer's* five-inch guns kept hammering directly overhead, each blast

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jarring the cutter as though it, not a U-boat, were the target.

Although the doctors assigned to cutters are there primarily to look after the officers and men aboard those ships, their services often are placed at the disposal of others. In convoy work, for instance, the cutters' doctors frequently are called upon to treat injured or ill seamen aboard the freighters, few of which carry their own doctors.

On one occasion during a severe storm, Dr. William C. Lewis diagnosed and prescribed treatment for one sailor's ailment aboard another ship by conversing with one of the ship's officers by short-wave radiophone. He got regular reports on the man's condition and gave directions for his care until the weather moderated sufficiently for him to transfer to the freighter and see the patient personally. On the same trip, members of a gun crew on another ship were injured in an accident and Dr. Lewis handled their case in the same manner until he could be rowed over to see them.

The association of the Coast Guard and the Public Health Service goes back a great many years. It started in fact with the establishment of the Marine Hospital Service, as the Public Health Service originally was known, in 1798—eight years after the creation of the Revenue Cutter Service. The Marine Hospital Service, as its name implies, was founded to care for merchant seamen. Actually, it can be regarded as the first example of organized socialized medicine in this

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country for the seamen were taxed twenty cents a month for the service.

It was a natural thing for the Revenue Cutter Service to send its men to the Marine Hospitals for treatment inasmuch as both services were under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department until the Public Health Service was transferred a few years ago to the Federal Security Agency.

The assignment of Public Health Service doctors to serve aboard Coast Guard vessels was just as logical, since in the early part of the nineteenth century the Coast Guard's mission was broadened to include the rendering of assistance to merchant ships in distress.

In peacetime, Public Health sends between twenty and twenty-five of its doctors each year to serve with the Coast Guard for periods ranging from one month to a year or more.

In the course of that service, they get a wide variety of experience. In addition to caring for the crews of the cutters, for example, the doctors who serve with the Bering Sea Patrol often have to minister to the native tribes in remote Alaskan villages who get no other medical care the year round.

One young doctor on that detail found to his surprise that nurses employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs frequently remove tonsils for the natives or perform appendectomies.

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In fact, a nurse who won't or can't remove tonsils doesn't rate very high with the Eskimos.

Looking after the men of the cod-fishing fleet which operates throughout the summer in Alaskan waters during peacetime is another chore of the Public Health doctors, but usually that doesn't entail anything more complicated than a finger infected after a losing engagement with a dirty fish-hook or an occasional appendectomy.

The young surgeons serving aboard the landing craft of the amphibious warfare forces in the Mediterranean lead a totally different kind of existence, obviously. Their vessels often were used as hospital ships to transport wounded soldiers or naval personnel from the invasion beaches back to base hospitals in Africa and the doctors' job would be to carry on as far as possible from where the medical personnel of the front-line dressing stations or field hospitals left off.

Before the Nazis' grip on the Mediterranean was broken, the Public Health Service doctors, like a lot of others in that area, often were under enemy fire. One of them had his sick bay literally shot out from under him but he merely salvaged what he could of his equipment, moved ashore and set up there until a new landing craft was provided.

All in all, it can be seen that the lot of the Public Health Service doctor afloat is just as tough as that of the men he sails with but there is something peculiarly fitting in having those members of so outstandingly self-sacrificial an organi-

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zation as the United States Public Health Service working shoulder to shoulder with an agency devoted primarily to the promotion of safety of life at sea—the United States Coast Guard.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### EIGHT BELLS

THE global nature of World War II carried the Coast Guard far beyond those territorial waters which were its only concern originally. So broadened were its horizons, in fact, that the name Coast Guard was distinctly a misnomer. More or less musically, many a member of the service put it this way:

"I'd like to meet the guy who named the Coast Guard,  
And find out what coast he had in mind."

It was the peacetime training and traditions behind that proud name, however, that qualified the "First Fleet" for its momentous war role. Similarly, it is clear that performance of that mighty mission has served to gear the Coast Guard for an expansion of its peacetime activities.

Manifestly, it will not be able to slough off all of its war-born chores as soon as the conflict is over, for some of them definitely belong in its peacetime curriculum.

One such, for example, is its inherited Merchant Marine Inspection Service with all that it means to safety of life at sea. And doubtless there will be others, for not all of war's by-products are bad.

THE END









Reg Ingraham, the Navy correspondent of *Time* Magazine, has written a fresh, exciting account of the unsung heroes of our United States Coast Guard. The Coast Guard may have received fewer medals than Army or Navy forces, but it has decorated itself with honor among fighting men and become distinguished by a surprising lack of concern for popular acclaim of truly heroic exploits.

Since 1790 when a few tiny cutters were launched by the Treasury Department to keep down smuggling and so the "First Fleet" came into existence, the Coast Guard has seen service in all our wars, and in the years between its men have trained to save lives—through rescue work, the Lighthouse Service, the International Ice Patrol.

Today Coast Guardsmen are on every battle front—manning invasion barges, plowing the seas in slim, gray ships for the perilous job of convoy escort, patrolling our own coast line of 50,000 miles and guarding our harbors against sabotage. Its most important duty has remained unchanged—the preservation of life and of property.

The Coast Guard has established a base on Greenland—Blue West One—and other posts where they man weather stations and perform incredible rescues of pilots and seamen. Few realize that hostility against the Axis was begun in Greenland more than three months before the outbreak of open war at Pearl Harbor.

The day is past when the Coast Guardsmen were known merely as "sandpounders"—patrollers of the Atlantic and Pacific beaches. Their proud record shows that many have risked their lives in line of duty on all our far-flung fronts. They have "fought

and excitement abounds in *First Fleet*, a mingling of humor and heroism simply but powerfully told. The epic of the *Zaida*, the stirring exploits of the cockleshell picket boats, a hundred other examples prove it.

*First Fleet* is addressed to every American who works for victory and who scans the newspapers anxiously to see how the fight is going. Here he will learn that if our country is safe and strong and free, a glorious part of the credit belongs to the Coast Guard—now and for a future beyond the horror of present war. He will get a kick whenever he sees the gold and silver shield.

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